

# THE DOMED CHURCH AS MICROCOSM: LITERARY ROOTS OF AN ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOL<sup>1</sup>

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In discussion of the domed, centrally-planned church typical of the Byzantine period, historians of art and architecture commonly refer to the “dome of heaven” and to the notion of the church as microcosm.<sup>2</sup> An important step in the application of these interpretations to sixth-century church buildings in general, and especially to Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, is provided by a Syriac hymn on another Hagia Sophia, the cathedral church of Edessa.<sup>3</sup> This hymn was most probably composed for the occasion of the dedication of the church after its Justinianic reconstruction, com-

pleted ca. A.D. 543–554.<sup>4</sup> It is the earliest extant document which associates the central dome (and other architectural features) of a Christian church with cosmology and mystical theology. Hence the hymn provides the first literary evidence for the popularization of the notion of the “dome of heaven” among Christians of the mid-sixth century.

Given the importance of this hymn for interpretations of Byzantine architecture, it is perhaps inevitable that it should be seen by some (e.g., E. A. Baldwin Smith) as typically Syrian and Near Eastern, whereas others (e.g., A. Grabar) see it as Syriac in language only but Greek in spirit.<sup>5</sup> The same dichotomy that characterizes the discussion of Byzantine art history in general is present in the discussion of this piece. While recognizing the interest and importance inherent in this discussion of the larger cultural context, I will attempt here to look more closely at the immediate literary and intellectual environment of this hymn, deliberately avoiding the presupposition of either a Near Eastern or a Greek background. This approach seems to me to be the most fruitful, given the complex cultural ambiance of sixth-century Edessa.

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of the present paper was delivered at the Spring Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, May 1980. I have benefited from discussions of this subject with too many persons to be able to name them all here. I am especially grateful to Ernst Kitzinger for suggesting that I undertake this study, and to Thomas Mathews, Glen Bowersock, and Corby Finney for numerous helpful suggestions and criticisms.

<sup>2</sup> E. A. Baldwin Smith, *The Dome of Heaven* (hereafter, *Dome*) (Princeton, 1950), 88 f.; K. Lehmann, *Art Bulletin*, 27 (1945), 1 ff.; A. Grabar, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: Byzantine Art in the Middle Ages* (hereafter, *Byzantine Art*) (New York, 1966), 68 f., 77, 106; H. Kähler and C. Mango, *Hagia Sophia* (London, 1967), 11; W. L. MacDonald, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (New York, 1962), 33; J. B. Ward Perkins, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 51 (1965), 198 ff.; R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore, 1979), 230. For a recent critique of Lehmann's view, cf. T. F. Mathews, “Cracks in Lehmann's ‘Dome of Heaven,’ *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, 1, no. 3 (Spring 1982), 12–16.

<sup>3</sup> Explicit references to this hymn in Smith, *Dome*, 74, 89–91 *et passim*; Grabar, *Byzantine Art*, 106; and Krautheimer, *op. cit.*, 230; and in R. W. Thomson, “Architectural Symbolism in Classical Armenian Literature,” *JThS*, n.s., 30 (1979), 102–14, mention of the Syriac hymn, 111. For the Syriac text, translations, and studies of the Edessa Hymn: Syriac text, German translation, and the history of the building, by H. Goussen, “Über eine ‘sugitha’ auf die Kathedrale von Edessa,” *Le Muséon*, 38 (1925), 117–36; another German translation with comments by A. M. Schneider, “Die Kathedrale von Edessa” (hereafter “Die Kathedrale”), *OrChr*, 36 (1941), 161–67; French translation and textual commentary by A. Dupont-Sommer with a study by A. Grabar, “Le témoignage d'un hymne syriaque sur l'architecture de la cathédrale d'Edesse au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle et sur la symbolique de l'édifice chrétien” (hereafter, “Le témoignage”), *CahArch*, 2 (1947), 29–67; Eng. trans. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 312–1453, *Sources and Documents in the History of Art* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1972), 57–60.

<sup>4</sup> For discussion of the date, cf. notes 123 f. *infra*; Averil Cameron, “The Sceptic and the Shroud” (hereafter “Shroud”), Inaugural Lecture, Departments of Classics and History, King's College (London, April 29, 1980), 23 f. note 46, argues for a later date, 553/4.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. works cited in notes 2, 3 *supra*. On Grabar's views, cf. Appendix 1.

I. The Syriac Text<sup>6</sup>

1. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 2. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 3. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 4. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 5. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 6. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 7. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 8. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 9. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 10. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 11. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 12. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 13. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 14. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*  
 15. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי*
  
 1. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B  
 2. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B  
 3. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B  
 4. *i < B*  
 5. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B  
 6. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B  
 7. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B  
 8. *i < B*  
 9. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B  
 10. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B  
 11. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B; lege *אָמַרְתִּי*  
 12. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B  
 13. *+ אָמַרְתִּי* B  
 14. *i < B*  
 15. *אָמַרְתִּי כִּי כִּי* B

<sup>6</sup>The text of the hymn was published by Goussen, *op. cit.*, 119 f., based on Vat. Syr. 95 (folios 49v–50v), a thirteenth-century collection of hymns in a serto hand. (Cf. S. E. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Apostolicae Vaticanae codicum mss. catalogus in tres partes distributus*, Part I, vols. 2 and 3 [Rome, 1758–59; repr. Paris, 1926], where, however, the MS is incorrectly identified as being in an estrangelo hand.) As published, however, the text of the hymn contains numerous errors. That the errors are simply misprints is shown by Goussen's translation, which agrees in all essential respects with my own. Since the textual errors have caused some confusion in subsequent studies of the piece, it seems useful to present an accurate text here. Further, a second MS of the hymn is to be found in Br. Lib. Add. 17,141 (fol. 109b–110a), a collection of hymns ascribed to Ephrem, Isaac of

Antioch and Jacob of Sarug. This MS dates to the eighth or ninth cent., but the Edessa Hymn has been added by a later hand, which Wright did not attempt to date (cf. W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum acquired since the year 1838*, 2 vols. [London, 1870–72], 362). The Vatican MS remains a more appropriate choice as the basic MS since the British Library MS (identified in the apparatus as B) contains several lacunae and errors. B's variant readings have been incorporated into the critical apparatus; orthographic errors have been ignored; the general method of edition is as in the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. I am grateful to Aelred Cody for examining the Vatican MS for me when I began this study. Although I was subsequently able to view both MSS myself, his preliminary assistance and observations were most valuable.

- 16 i + נ B

17 אוֹלְעֵל err B

18 רַקְעָנָה B; lege as if רַקְעָנָה but modified for the sake of the alphabetic acrostic

19 רַקְעָנָה B

20 רַקְעָנָה B

21 רַקְעָנָה B

22 רַקְעָנָה B

23 < v. 8 err B

24 cum punct. fem. B

25 י א B

26 י + נ B

27 וְלִזְבּוֹן B

28 י + ו B

29 וְלִזְבּוֹן B

30 < v. 11 c, d err B

31 interlin 1° m. B

32 cum punct. fem. B

33 cum suff. fem. B

34 רַעֲנָה B

35 רַעֲנָה B

36 רַעֲנָה B

37 lege + וְלִזְבּוֹן B

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 38 <sup>1</sup> | < v. 13 c, d <u>et</u> 14 <u>err</u> B |
| 39              | B                                      |
| 40              | <u>i</u> < B                           |
| 41              | B                                      |
| 42 <sup>1</sup> | וְיָמֵן וְיָמֵן וְיָמֵן B              |
| 43              | B                                      |
| 44 <sup>1</sup> | וְיָמֵן B                              |
| 45              | B                                      |
| 46              | וְיָמֵן B                              |
| 47              | וְיָמֵן B                              |
| 48 <sup>1</sup> | וְיָמֵן B                              |
| 49              | < v. 19-22 <u>err</u> B,<br>+  B       |

## II. Translation

## ANOTHER SOGITHA

- 1 Oh Being Itself who dwells in the holy Temple, whose glory naturally [emanates] from it,  
Grant me the grace of the Holy Spirit to speak about the Temple that is in Urha.
- 2 Bezalel constructed the Tabernacle for us with the model he learned from Moses,  
And Amidonius and Asaph and Addai built a glorious temple for You in Urha.
- 3 Clearly portrayed in it are the mysteries of both Your Essence and Your Dispensation.  
He who looks closely will be filled at length with wonder.
- 4 For it truly is a wonder that its smallness is like the wide world,  
Not in size but in type; like the sea, waters surround it.
- 5 Behold! Its ceiling is stretched out like the sky and without columns [it is] arched and simple,  
And it is also decorated with golden mosaic, as the firmament [is] with shining stars.
- 6 And its lofty dome—behold, it resembles the highest heaven,  
And like a helmet it is firmly placed on its lower [part].
- 7 The splendor of its broad arches—they portray the four ends of the earth.  
They resemble also by the variety of their colors the glorious rainbow.
- 8 Other arches surround it like crags jutting out from a mountain,  
Upon, by and through which its entire ceiling is fastened on the vaults.
- 9 Its marble resembles an image not [made] by hands, and its walls are suitably overlaid [with marble].  
And from its brightness, polished and white, light gathers in it like the sun.
- 10 Lead was put on its roof so it would not be damaged by streams of rain;  
There is no wood at all in its ceiling, which is as if entirely cast from stone.
- 11 It is surrounded by magnificent courts with two porticoes composed of columns  
Which portray the tribes of Israelites who surrounded the [temporal] Tabernacle.
- 12 On every side it has the same façade; the form of the three of them is one  
Just as the form of the holy Trinity is one.
- 13 One light shines forth also in its sanctuary by three open windows,  
And announces to us the mystery of the Trinity, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- 14 And the light of its three sides abides in many windows.  
It portrays the apostles, Our Lord, the prophets, martyrs and confessors.
- 15 The ambo is placed in the middle of [the church] on the model of the Upper Room at Zion,  
And under it are eleven columns, like the eleven apostles that were hidden.
- 16 The column that is behind the ambo portrays Golgotha in its form,  
And fastened above it is the cross of light, like Our Lord between the thieves.
- 17 Five doors open into [the church] like the five virgins,  
And the faithful enter by them, gloriously like the virgins to the bridal couch of light.
- 18 Portrayed by the ten columns that support the Cherubim of its altar  
Are the ten apostles, those who fled at the time that our Savior was crucified.
- 19 The structure of nine steps that are placed in the sanctuary of [the church] together with the *synthronos*  
Portrays the throne of Christ and the nine orders of angels.
- 20 Exalted are the mysteries of this temple in which heaven and earth  
Symbolize the most exalted Trinity and our Savior's Dispensation.
- 21 The apostles, [the church's] foundations in the Holy Spirit, and prophets and martyrs are symbolized  
in it.  
By the prayer of the Blessed Mother may their memory abide above in heaven.
- 22 May the most exalted Trinity that strengthened those who built [the church]  
Keep us from all evils and preserve us from injuries.

### III. Commentary on the Text and Translation

#### TITLE

*Another Sogitha:*

While the Vatican manuscript has simply “another sogitha,” the British Museum manuscript says, “On the great church of Urha.” Neither is likely to be the original title, if there was one—the first, for obvious reasons; the second, because the hymn consistently refers to the “temple” rather than the “church.”

#### STR. 1.

*Being Itself:*

The Syriac word used here (*i̥thyâ*) occurred in Ephrem’s *Commentary on Genesis* and in Narsai’s *Homilies on Genesis* with the specific meaning of “Being Itself” applicable only to God. In Ephrem’s commentary (especially Intro. 4; I,2 and I,16) God as “Being Itself” is contrasted with the five elements created *ex nihilo* (heaven, earth, fire, water, and wind), as well as with the rest of the material world, made from these first five elements.<sup>7</sup> Either from Ephrem or, more probably, from Theodore of Mopsuestia, Narsai adopted the same exclusive use of the term for God and further specified that not even the three persons of the Trinity might be referred to as *i̥hyê* (pl.), but only the Godhead in its unity is “Being Itself.”<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, Stephen bar Sudaili used a transliteration of the Greek οὐσία for the Deity as well as for all creatures, rational and irrational.<sup>9</sup> This is as one might expect in Stephen’s ontologically fluid Origenistic system. On this point the Edessa Hymn has no apparent Origenistic heritage.

Dupont-Sommer had suggested that “Essence” (οὐσία) rather than “Being” was an appropriate translation of *i̥thyâ* here. Grabar then argued that this was one of the Pseudo-Dionysian features of

<sup>7</sup>R. M. Tonneau, ed. and Latin trans., *Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et Exodum Commentarii*, CSCO, 152, 153 (Louvain, 1955); Ephrem’s use of the word is discussed by Nabil El-Khoury in *Die Interpretation der Welt bei Ephraem dem Syrer*, Tübinger Theologische Studien, 6 (Tübingen, 1976), 65–81.

<sup>8</sup>P. Gignoux, ed., trans., intro., *Homélies de Narsai sur la Créeation* (hereafter, *Homélies de Narsai*), PO, 34 (Paris, 1968), 433 ff., 465, 472, and all references to “L’Etre par soi” in the index, 709.

<sup>9</sup>F. S. Marsh, ed., trans., *The Book which is called The Book of the Holy Hierotheos with Extracts from the Prolegomena and Commentary of Theodosius of Antioch and from the “Book of Excerpts” and other works of Gregory Bar Hebraeus* (London-Oxford, 1927), 230. Further on Stephen, cf. notes to strophe 19 *infra*. For an example in Jacob of Sarug, cf. notes to strophe 12 *infra*.

the hymn.<sup>10</sup> But the use of the term by Ephrem and Narsai indicates that a Pseudo-Dionysian connection is not self-evident. The influence of Ephrem or of the Antiochene School is most probable here.

*Temple:*

The choice of the Syriac word *hayklâ* (temple, palace, or church) here is provocative. Either *‘idhthâ* (assembly, congregation, church = ἐκκλησία) or *knûšthâ* (congregation, synagogue) would have been acceptable from the metric standpoint. Most probably the choice was deliberate, emphasizing the building as a holy place, independent of the presence or absence of a congregation. The cosmic temple is a common theme in Hellenistic Greek literature which was appropriated by early Christian writers, at first primarily as a description of the individual believer or of the believing community and eventually, in Eusebius’ speech on the church at Tyre, to describe the church building.<sup>11</sup>

Some connection with early Jewish mysticism is possible. Among the most important literary remains of early Jewish mysticism are the *Hekhaloth Books*, so named because they contain descriptions of the seven heavenly palaces (*hekhaloth*) through which the visionary passes en route to the vision of the throne of glory. Some of these materials date to the second century and were edited in the fifth or sixth century A.D. to their present form. The texts were being edited and translated by Gershom Scholem, but their history and literary context are not yet clear.<sup>12</sup>

On the basis of John 2:19,21, Dupont-Sommer suggested that the Temple is not primarily the church building but Christ.<sup>13</sup> This is an interesting hypothesis but needs corroboration in contemporaneous sources.

*Whose glory . . . from it:*

The Syriac text here allows four distinct translations:

<sup>10</sup>Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, 32 f. (*supra*, note 3), and Grabar, “Le témoignage,” 55.

<sup>11</sup>On the Hellenistic τόπος of Temple-House-Cosmos, cf. A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, II, *Le Dieu cosmique* (Paris, 1949), 233–38. For early Christian use of this theme, cf. R. Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VII<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (hereafter, *Commentaires*), AOC, 9 (Paris, 1966), 99 f.; for a more extensive treatment, cf. P. C. Finney, “TOPOS HIEROS und christlicher Sakralbau in vorkonstantinischer Überlieferung,” *RQ* (forthcoming).

<sup>12</sup>For an introductory discussion, cf. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem, 1941), 42–78; and more recently, cf. *idem*, *Kabbalah* (New York, 1974), 14–20, 373–76. For an enumeration of the sources, cf. *idem*, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960), 5–7.

<sup>13</sup>Dupont-Sommer, *loc. cit. (supra*, note 3).

1. God's glory [emanates] naturally from Himself
2. God's glory [emanates] naturally from the Temple
3. The glory of the Temple [emanates] naturally from God (Dupont-Sommer, Mango)
4. The glory of the Temple [emanates] naturally from itself (Goussen, Schneider)

The second possibility—that God's glory flows forth naturally from the Temple, i.e., from the church building—is both simple and internally consistent with the rest of the hymn. Proceeding from his Christological interpretation of the Temple, Dupont-Sommer argued for the third translation (above) as a statement of the divinity of the Son. He added further that the verse as a whole thereby gains a Trinitarian interpretation, the Father being the Divine Essence, the Son the Temple, and the Holy Spirit mentioned as such.<sup>13a</sup> His interpretation is ingenious but not compelling.

Similar phrases occur in Narsai's *Homilies on Creation*, though his intent is more clearly anti-Origenistic. Without rejecting the immanence of God altogether, Narsai is clearly concerned to emphasize His transcendence over the creation:

“His glory is in His nature  
and His majesty is with His Essence.  
He neither decreases nor increases,  
for His nature is too great for these things.”  
(III, 376 f.)

“By the power that (flows) from Me,  
I made heaven and earth and all that is in them.”  
(God to Moses; III, 18)

(Also cf. V, 363–380 on the glory of God.<sup>14</sup>)

The theological position of the Edessa Hymn on this point is not discernible.

#### *Urha:*

The Syriac uses the Semitic name of the city, Urha, rather than the Hellenistic Greek name, Edessa.<sup>15</sup>

#### STR. 2.

##### *Bezalel:*

Bezalel was the artisan chosen by God to direct the construction of the Tabernacle according to the instructions given by God to Moses (Exodus 35:30 ff.).

<sup>13a</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ginoux, *Homélies de Narsai*.

<sup>15</sup>For the history of the city and its name, cf. E. Kirsten, “Edessa,” RAC, 4, 552–97, or J. B. Segal, *Edessa: the Blessed City* (hereafter, *Edessa*) (Oxford, 1970), 1–6 *et passim*.

#### *Tabernacle:*

The description of the construction of the Tabernacle in Exodus 25–27 was the focus of cosmological speculation for both Jews and Christians in the early Christian centuries. A portion of this speculative exegetical literature forms the matrix of the symbolism of the present hymn. Scholars are divided on the question of the dating of some of the important Jewish materials. While Scholem thinks the Shekinah as a full feminine counterpart to Yahweh develops only in the medieval Kabbalah, Patai argues that this notion dates to the Midrashic period.<sup>16</sup> Comprehensive discussion of the Jewish materials has not been attempted here, not only because of the difficulties inherent in that subject, but also because it is fairly unlikely that they exercised any direct influence on a Christian hymn composed as late as the mid-sixth century C.E.<sup>17</sup> The Christian materials will be discussed in the body of the paper.

#### *Model:*

Like its Greek cognate, τύπος, the Syriac *tūpsā* means “form,” “model,” “representation,” or “image.” Dupont-Sommer noted that it was a *terminus technicus* of theology, but he did not specify its importance in the context of early Christian biblical interpretation.<sup>18</sup>

Even before the fifth-century translations into Syriac of the commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodore of Tarsus, this terminology was established in Syriac literature. Both Aphrahat and Ephrem use the Syriac *tūpsā* synonymously with *rāzā*, mystery (= Greek μνήσητιον), giving both words primarily the force of a Christological symbol.<sup>19</sup> The symbolism may have Scripture as its primary matrix with various figures from the Old Testament interpreted as types of Christ. Or Christ as the Paschal Lamb may be interpreted in a sacramental matrix

<sup>16</sup>G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York, 1965), 104 f.; R. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (New York, 1967), 137–56. For a recent discussion, cf. M. Pope, *The Song of Songs, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, VII, c (New York, 1977), 153 ff., esp. 158–61.

<sup>17</sup>S. Brock, “Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources,” JJS, 30 (1979), 212–32, esp. 226–28.

<sup>18</sup>Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, 33. The considerable literature on the history of exegesis which has appeared since Dupont-Sommer's work cannot be cited here. But a fundamental understanding of the use of the term “typos” in Greek Christian exegesis may be gained from the following works: G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woolcombe, *Essays on Typology* (London, 1957); *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, I, *From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. G. Evans (Cambridge, 1970), esp. essays by R. P. C. Hanson and M. F. Wiles, 412–509.

<sup>19</sup>E. Beck, “Symbolum-Mysterium bei Aphraat und Ephräm” (hereafter, “Symbolum”), *OrChr*, 42 (1958), 19–40.

as the central mystery of salvation symbolically realized in the sacraments (eucharist, baptism, and myron). Ephrem extends the use of the term mystery (*râzâ*) to the names of the Trinity as well.<sup>20</sup>

The language of typology and symbolism recurs throughout the Edessa Hymn, specifically:

*tûpsâ* translated as “model,” “type,” or “form” in strophes 2, 4, 12, and 15

*tps* (also from Greek *tûpoς*) translated “symbolize” in strophes 20, 21

*râzâ*, “mystery” in strophes 3, 13, 20

*zwr*, “portray” in strophes 7, 11, 14, 16, 18, 19

*dm'*, “resemble” in strophes 6, 7

*tb'*, “resemble” in strope 9

*'aykh*, “like” in strophes 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 16, 17d

*b'dhmôth* “like” in strope 17b

*'aykanâ d*, “just as” in strope 12

#### *Amidonius, Asaph, and Addai:*

Goussen's suggestions that Amidonius was the thirty-eighth Bishop of Edessa (Amazon)—a Chalcedonian—and that Asaph and Addai were the architects, have won general acceptance.<sup>21</sup>

#### STR. 3.

##### *Essence:*

The Syriac word *îthûthâ* may be used for either *oὐσία* or *ὑπόστασις* in Greek.

##### *Dispensation:*

The Syriac word is the equivalent of Greek *οἰκονομία*. The distinction between theology and economy is common in the Patristic period. Since it continues to play an important role for all three parties in the Christological controversies,<sup>22</sup> its prominence here does not help to define the theological commitment of the hymn's author.

##### *will be filled with wonder:*

A sense of awe is awakened in the viewer of God's mysteries as revealed through the building. A similar notion with more explicit anagogical overtones is found in Procopius' *On Buildings*, I.I.61: “And whenever anyone enters this church to pray, he understands at once that it is not by any human power or skill, but by the influence of God that this work has been so finely turned. And so his mind is lifted up toward God and exalted, feeling that He

<sup>20</sup>Cf. notes to strope 13 *infra*.

<sup>21</sup>Goussen, *op. cit.*, 121 f.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)* (Chicago, 1974), 76 *et passim*.

cannot be far away, but must especially love to dwell in this place which He has chosen.”<sup>23</sup>

#### STR. 4.

##### *like the wide world:*

That the cosmos is like a building and, conversely, that certain buildings—house, temple, and palace—are like the cosmos, was a popular notion widespread in the ancient Near East.<sup>24</sup> This tradition continued especially in the exegetical tradition of Christian Antioch, where the cosmos was commonly portrayed as a building, often a two-storeyed structure.<sup>25</sup>

##### *Waters surround it:*

The church was actually situated between two streams and adjacent to a pond.<sup>26</sup> The entire city of Edessa itself was, in a sense, surrounded by water. The River Skirtos (Daişan) ran through it, and several springs and pools were within—some of them reputed to have healing properties and containing fish sacred to Atargatis.<sup>27</sup>

This topographic reality corresponded readily to the popular cosmology of the Near East. Of the Sumerians, for example, Harrelson observes: “The abode of the gods was the upper heavens, a region quite distinct from the world of men. The earth, conceived of as a disc surrounded by waters and anchored to mountain peaks below its surface, was separated from heaven by the open sky and especially by the firmament, a solid substance holding the upper waters in place and preventing their rushing in upon the earth. The underworld contained vast seas and land areas as well, the latter containing the abode of the dead.”<sup>28</sup> The biblical accounts of creation, especially the Priestly account, share this basic cosmology.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Noted by A. Cameron, in F. C. Corippus, *In iaudem Iustini Augusti minoris*, bk. IV (London, 1976), 207.

<sup>24</sup>For general discussion of Near Eastern cosmology as well as the notion of heavenly archetypes and their relation to worship, cf. W. Harrelson, *From Fertility Cult to Worship* (New York, 1969), esp. 1–18.

<sup>25</sup>W. Wolska, *La Topographie Chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes. Théologie et Science au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (hereafter, *Topographie*) (Paris, 1962), esp. 136–42. Also cf. Part VII of the present study.

<sup>26</sup>Segal, *Edessa*, 189 and Plan I, 262 f.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 6–8, 48 f., 54–56.

<sup>28</sup>Harrelson, *op. cit.*, 2.

<sup>29</sup>For a translation of the *Enûma Elish*, the Babylonian creation myth, with discussion of its relation to the account in Genesis 1–2, cf. Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis. The Story of the Creation* (Chicago, 1942). The extensive secondary literature on this subject cannot be fully cited here, but particularly useful at an introductory level are: Nahum Sarna, *Understanding*

This cosmology was maintained in the early Christian period by the Antiochene school of exegesis. In Alexandria in the mid-sixth century, cosmology became an explicit subject of debate between representatives of the Antiochene and Alexandrian Christian traditions. Cosmas Indicopleustes, a Nestorian, representing the biblical cosmology and the Antiochene theological system, contended against John Philoponus, a Monophysite, who defended the Ptolemaic cosmology and, implicitly, the Alexandrian tradition.<sup>30</sup> Even Cosmas' views had been affected by a variety of Greek and other influences.<sup>31</sup> Unlike the created order described in Genesis, his cosmos is suspended over nothingness rather than over water. Cosmas still thinks of the earth as surrounded by water, but now it is the land mass surrounded by the ocean on a disc, all of it suspended over the void.<sup>32</sup> Jacob of Sarug is in agreement with Cosmas on this point.<sup>33</sup>

#### STRS. 5–6.

*ceiling . . . sky; dome . . . highest heaven:*

Citing strophe 8 where the entire ceiling is said to be supported by the arches, Grabar argued that the ceiling and the dome are synonymous, as are the sky and the highest heaven which they represent.<sup>34</sup> This identification is necessary if the form of the church is a cube surmounted by a dome, as Grabar contended. But the language of the hymn itself does not support this interpretation. Instead the ceiling, which represents the sky, and the dome, which represents the highest heaven, the highest point in the tent-shaped sky, seem, both architecturally and symbolically, to be two different entities. On this point Schneider's interpretation is more acceptable.

*Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York, 1966); and S. H. Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology* (Baltimore, 1963), esp. 117–21.

<sup>30</sup> Wolska, *Topographie*, esp. 147–92. The sixth-century discussion did not settle this issue for Byzantine Christians. For a twelfth-century description of Hagia Sophia of Constantinople which shares the Edessa Hymn's interest in cosmology and architectural mysticism but differs in choosing the Ptolemaic rather than the Antiochene biblical cosmology, cf. C. Mango and J. Parker, "A Twelfth-century Description of St. Sophia," *DOP*, 14 (1960), 233–45, esp. 237 ff.

<sup>31</sup> Wolska, *Topographie*, 219–44.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 260 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Jacob's homilies in hexaemeron are discussed in detail in part VII of this paper.

<sup>34</sup> That is, *t̄līlā* = *tr̄llōs* and *šmay* = *šmay šmayā*; cf. Grabar, "Le témoignage" (*supra*, note 3), 45.

#### STR. 5.

*without columns:*

For Grabar this phrase stresses the contrast between the structure of this church and the basilicas as well as most contemporaneous domed churches which utilized columns to support the dome.<sup>35</sup> Whatever the architecture, a literary allusion to the Hexaemera of the Antiochene School is likely. It is a commonplace of this tradition to contrast God's manner of building with the human approach, since God constructed the cosmos from the top downward, first miraculously suspending the ceiling, then adding the lower structures.<sup>36</sup> The absence of columns or other supports under the earth is also stressed by both Cosmas and Jacob—a rejection of the Ionian cosmology.<sup>37</sup>

*mosaic:*

Dupont-Sommer corrected the previous translations at this point.<sup>38</sup>

#### STR. 6.

*helmet:*

Smith suggested that the helmet is another cosmological symbol, in this case connected with the cult of the Dioskuri as well as with Hittite mythology. He adduced parallels in Josephus on the miter of the High Priest, and in Paul the Silentary on the dome of Hagia Sophia of Constantinople.<sup>39</sup>

#### STR. 7.

*The splendor of its broad arches:*

Here the translation differs from earlier renderings, because of the correction of the text. The manuscripts have "broad" in the plural, thus modifying "arches" (pl.) rather than "splendor" (sing.). Word order and meter support the plural reading as well. *Zalgūthā*, a word unattested elsewhere, is apparently to be taken as *mazlēgūthā*. The exigencies of the alphabetical acrostic best explain the poet's neologism as well as the odd phraseology.

This strophe, together with strophes 12 and 14, provides the principal evidence for Schneider's reconstruction of the building as a cruciform church, since they seem to indicate that there are four arches

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> T. Jansma, "L'Hexameron de Jacques de Saroug" (hereafter, "Hexameron"), *OrSyr*, 4 (1959), 18 f., 21, 39, 41, 282.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Wolska, *Topographie*, 220 f.

<sup>38</sup> Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, 33 f.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *Dome*, 77–79.

opening in the four cardinal directions. Dupont-Sommer agreed with this interpretation and added the suggestion that the arches most probably owed their colorful splendor to mosaic decoration.

Numerical symbolism appears in this strophe and then figures significantly in strophes 11–19. Early Christian exegesis in general included symbolic interpretation of numbers. Pythagorean lore made its way into Christian exegesis through Philo and the Alexandrian Christian exegetes to Augustine in the West.<sup>40</sup> Less elaborate numerology found a place in the hexaemera of Basil of Caesarea and others, whose influence is felt in Jacob of Sarug's Syriac homilies in hexaemeron.<sup>41</sup> More intricate and esoteric numerical speculation entered the Syriac-speaking environment with the writings of Evagrius of Pontus.<sup>42</sup> The Pseudo-Dionysian writings, while sharing this interest with the hymn's author, as Grabar noted,<sup>43</sup> merely share a commonplace. The hymn's numerological allusions do not correspond consistently with any particular school of thought. The number four is almost universally a sacred number. Its association with the "ends of the earth" is typical of the language of the Bible and does not necessarily imply the rejection of a spherical cosmos.<sup>44</sup>

#### STR. 8.

##### *Other arches . . . ceiling:*

Dupont-Sommer and Grabar argued that these arches were the squinches which supported the central dome of the church and that, therefore, the "ceiling" mentioned here must actually be the dome.<sup>45</sup> An interpretation which maintains a distinction between the ceiling and the dome would

<sup>40</sup> V. F. Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism. Its sources, meaning and influence on thought and expression* (New York, 1938); Marie Comeau, *Saint Augustin, exégète du quatrième Evangile*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1930), 127–42; M. Pontet, *L'exégèse de S. Augustin prédicateur* (Paris, 1945), 278–303.

<sup>41</sup> Jansma, "Hexameron," 4–43, 129–62, 253–85, esp. 40–42.

<sup>42</sup> A. Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Evagre le Pontique et l'Histoire de l'Origenisme chez les grecs et chez les syriens* (hereafter, *Kephalaia et l'Origenisme*), *Patristica Sorboniensia*, 5 (Paris, 1962), 34 f.

<sup>43</sup> Grabar, "Le témoignage," 56 f.

<sup>44</sup> For discussion and further bibliography, cf. Wolska, *Topographie*, 133–36. Numerical symbolism was popular among Armenian Christians as well. For a survey of Armenian interpretations with "possible sources and parallels in Greek or Syriac texts which were known in Armenia," cf. R. W. Thomson, "Number Symbolism and Patristic Exegesis in Some Early Armenian Writers," *Handes Amsarya*, 90 (1976), 117–138; on the number four, cf. 120–24.

<sup>45</sup> Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, 34 f. (*supra*, note 3) Mango accepts this interpretation, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 58.

be preferable.<sup>46</sup> The Syriac here translated "arches" could be read as "vaults" or "hollows," allowing even the possibility that the half-domes of a cubic tri-conch are meant.<sup>47</sup>

#### STR. 9.

##### *Its marble resembles an image not [made] by hands:*

This phrase has provoked considerable discussion. Since Edessa was the home of one of the most famous ἀχειροποίητοι of the Byzantine period, scholars have assumed that this is an allusion to that icon and that, therefore, the date of discovery of the icon provides a terminus post quem for the hymn or, conversely, that the hymn provides a terminus ante quem for the icon.<sup>48</sup> This assumption led Goussen to translate *tbi<sup>c</sup> b* as "set in": "Eingelassen in seinen Marmor ist das ohne Hände gemachte Bild."<sup>49</sup> Schneider followed Goussen on this point.<sup>50</sup> Dupont-Sommer proposed a very different translation: "Son marbre est semblable à l'Image non faite de main."<sup>51</sup> Mango adopted this interpretation,<sup>52</sup> as I have also.

Dupont-Sommer correctly observed that the earlier translations transposed the subject and object of the preposition. If *tbi<sup>c</sup>* were taken in its literal sense, the marble would be "set into" the "image not [made] by hands" rather than vice versa—a translation which is scarcely adequate. Segal avoids this problem by translating: "Its marble bears the

<sup>46</sup> Cf. remarks on strophes 5–6 *supra*.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. remarks on strophe 12 *infra*.

<sup>48</sup> Apart from the present hymn, the earliest allusion to the *acheiropoiētos* of Edessa is in Evagrius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, IV.27, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London, 1898; repr. Amsterdam, 1964). The classic study of the Image of Edessa is E. von Dobschütz, "Das Christusbild von Edessa," Kap. 5 of *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur Christlichen Legende*, TU, ser. 2, III (Leipzig, 1899), 102–96. Others are S. Runciman, "Some Remarks on the Image of Edessa," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 3 (1931), 238–52; A. Grabar, *L'Iconoclasmus byzantin* (Paris, 1957), 31 ff.; E. Kirsten, "Edessa" (*supra*, note 15), esp. 568–74; *idem*, "Edessa. Eine römische Grenzstadt des 4. bis 6. Jahrhunderts im Orient," *JbAChr*, 6 (1963), 155 ff.; P. Devos, "Egérie à Edesse. S. Thomas l'Apôtre. Le Roi Abgar," *AnalBoll*, 85 (1967), 381–400; Segal, *Edessa*, 76–78, 189, 250, *et passim*; H. J. W. Drijvers, "Hatra, Palmyra und Edessa," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II.8 (Berlin, 1977), 893–906; Averil Cameron, "Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium," *Past and Present*, 84 (1979), 23 f. For a recent reassessment of the dating of the image of Edessa, with attention to the Edessa Hymn, cf. Cameron, "Shroud" (*supra*, note 4). For some additional bibliography, cf. *The Teaching of Addai*, trans. G. Howard, *SBL Texts and Translations*, 16 (Ann Arbor, 1981), viii f.

<sup>49</sup> Goussen, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 3), 120, 122.

<sup>50</sup> Schneider, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 3), 162.

<sup>51</sup> Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, 31, 35.

<sup>52</sup> Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire* (*supra*, note 3), 58.

impress of the portrait [of Jesus, made] without [mortal] hands.”<sup>53</sup> But M. Mundell has noted a difficulty with any translation which portrays the icon as attached to the wall of the church: such icons were not normally placed on permanent display.<sup>54</sup> Despite the issue raised by Mundell, Cameron has argued that the literal sense is more common and therefore to be preferred.<sup>55</sup>

The correct translation is the one proposed by Dupont-Sommer. In justification of his translation, he cited Brockelmann’s entry of *similis* as the translation of *tbi<sup>c</sup>*.<sup>56</sup> Brockelmann had offered two references to Ephrem’s *Commentary on Genesis* in support of this translation.<sup>57</sup> In the first Ephrem observed that Seth, in resembling Adam, prefigured the Son’s likeness to the Father. In the second he simply said that Ishmael resembled his mother. The context of biblical commentary and the specific meaning of the first reference suggest that the connection between the literal and figurative meanings of *tbi<sup>c</sup>* is analogous to the meanings of the Greek *túptw* and *túpōs*, from which the notion of typological exegesis is derived. The Greek *túptw* has the literal meaning “to stamp, mold, impress,” with reference to a coin or seal. From this the theological and philosophical meanings are derived. The Syriac Christian writers, in translating the Greek notions of biblical typology, most frequently used the cognate denominative verb *tapse* (from *tupsa* = Gk. *túpōs*). But occasionally at least Ephrem used *tbi<sup>c</sup>*, the literal Syriac equivalent of *túptw*. The author of the hymn has followed the latter course here.

Although our translation is compatible with the contemporaneous cult of icons, we must consider the possibility that the phrase in question does not allude at all to the famous icon. It is reasonable to construe the phrase *zûrthâ dâ b’idhîn* as an icon “not made by hands.” Like its Greek counterpart, *ἀχειροποίητος*, however, the expression *dâ b’idhîn* oc-

<sup>53</sup> Segal, *Edessa*, 189.

<sup>54</sup> M. Mundell, “Monophysite Church Decoration,” in A. Bryer and J. Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham, 1977), 59–74, esp. 65.

<sup>55</sup> Cameron discusses this in “Shroud,” 10, 25 note 47. Without addressing the grammatical difficulty noted by Dupont-Sommer, she cites the opinions of S. Brock, H. J. W. Drijvers and J. B. Segal in favor of the literal sense.

<sup>56</sup> C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* (Göttingen, 1928), 267b.

<sup>57</sup> *Ephraemi Syri opera omnia*, ed. P. Benedictus (Rome, 1737–43), 47c, 75E; cf. *Sancti Ephraem, Syri in Genesim et in Exodum commentarii V.I and XVIII.I*, ed. and trans. R. M. Tonneau, CSCO (Louvain, 1955), v. 152, 54; v. 153, 43; In Seth autem, qui omnino similis fuit Adae, similitudo Filii figurata est qui signatus a Patre, suo genitore, sicut Seth ab Adam qui progenuit eum. v. 152, 82; v. 153, 68; Sara autem, quae vidit quantum conformatur matri eius Ismael. . . .

curs in the New Testament and in other early Christian writings in contexts which have no direct connection with the later cult of images.<sup>58</sup> Since the Edessa Hymn dates to the formative period of this piety,<sup>59</sup> we should not assume that the reference here is to be construed according to the Byzantine usage rather than according to the earlier Christian usage. That is, we should not assume that this is a reference to an icon or to the icon of Edessa without consideration of the possibility that it is a more general allusion to things not made by human craft, whether from the natural rather than the civilized world or from a heavenly rather than an earthly context. Since Syriac does not distinguish a definite from an indefinite article, this strophe could refer to the famous image of Edessa, as is usually assumed, or it could equally refer only to the general notion of an *ἀχειροποίητος*, as I have interpreted it here. In the latter case the line means that the pattern in the marble was like a picture made without human agency.<sup>60</sup>

#### STR. 10.

*Lead . . . stone:*

It is difficult to evaluate this strophe as an actual description of the architectural features involved. Grabar makes some suggestions but does not ad-

<sup>58</sup> Von Dobschütz argued that there were four uses of *ἀχειροποίητος* distinct from and mostly antecedent to any reference to icons: (1) natural things, made by God rather than by human craft; (2) the human body; (3) heavenly things as opposed to their earthly images in a Platonic or Philonian context; (4) spiritual, as opposed to physical things. These uses, especially the latter two, are attested in the New Testament and in Patristic literature, notably in scriptural commentary on the New Testament passages (Mark 14:58; 2 Cor. 5:1, Col. 2:11; Heb. 8:2, 9:11, 9:23 ff.). The specific notion of icons as *ἀχειροποίητος*, according to von Dobschütz, does not occur until the Justinianic period (*op. cit. [supra]*, note 48), esp. 37–39, 118\*–122\*). In most New Testament passages where the Greek uses *ἀχειροποίητος*, the Peshitta uses a phrase similar to or identical with the phrase used here in the Edessa Hymn: (1) *dâ b’idhâyâ* in Mark 14:58, Heb. 9:11 and Heb. 9:24 (with slight modification); (2) *dâ bâ bâdh’ idhâyâ* in 2 Cor. 5:1; (3) *dâ b’idhîn* in Col. 2:11. Other examples in Syriac which antedate the Edessa Hymn are unknown to me; cf. only R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (Oxford, 1979, 1901), 1547 (on *’idhâyâ*) and 2769 (τὰ χειροποίητα = *idola*, for the opposite to our phrase).

<sup>59</sup> E. Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Period before Iconoclasm,” *DOP*, 8 (1954), 85–150; *idem*, “Byzantine Art in the Period between Justinian and Iconoclasm,” *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinistenkongress* (1958), 41–50; A. Grabar, *L’Iconoclasme byzantin* (*supra*, note 48), 21 ff.; P. Brown, “A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy,” *EHR*, 88 (1973), 1–34; Cameron, “Images of Authority” (*supra*, note 48).

<sup>60</sup> Mango (*Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 58 note 14) suggested the allusion was to the pattern in the marble but did not infer from this, as I do, that there was no allusion to the icon.

duce any parallels.<sup>61</sup> Smith infers from this strophe that the “pre-Justinianic church had a wooden cosmic dome like those on the Syrian martyria.”<sup>62</sup> Early Christian speculation on the Tabernacle suggests a symbolic significance either alongside or in place of a literal significance. Gregory of Nyssa’s description of the Tabernacle in his *Life of Moses*, 170 stresses the use of precious metals and very little wood.<sup>63</sup> Even that wood which is used is said to be “wood that does not rot.”

#### STR. 11.

*... columns Which portray the tribes of Israelites . . . :*

This and similar statements in strophes 15 and 18, have parallels in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Moses*, 184, where apostles, teachers, and prophets and “all those who themselves support the Church and become lights through their own works are called ‘pillars’ and ‘light.’”

#### STR. 12.

*On every side it has the same façade:*

Schneider translated this, “Jede Seite hat ein und dieselbe Fassade,” and suggested that the church was cruciform. Grabar took essentially the same translation, “De chaque côté il possède une façade identique,” but from it he argued that the church must be cubic rather than cruciform, or there would be more than three identical sides.<sup>64</sup> But the word they translated as “side” (Seite, côté) could equally be rendered “region, quarter, district” or, as in my translation, “part.” (The same word was used in strophe 7 in the sense of the four “ends” of the earth.) Then Schneider’s architectural interpretation would be as acceptable as Grabar’s on this point.

Neither reconstruction takes into account, however, the fact that the five doors (str. 17) make it impossible for the north, west, and south sides of the church to be the same. Both Schneider and Grabar assume that the unique side is the east, which would have an apse. An interesting alternative solution, mentioned by Grabar but hastily dismissed, is the cubic triconch, a cubic structure with central dome and three semicircular apses surmounted by half-domes, such as the churches at Mren and Ar-

<sup>61</sup> Grabar, “Le témoignage,” 44 (*supra*, note 3).

<sup>62</sup> Smith, *Dome* (*supra*, note 2), 90 f.

<sup>63</sup> For bibliography on Gregory’s *Life of Moses*, cf. note 171 *infra*.

<sup>64</sup> Grabar, “Le témoignage,” 46 note 3.

tik in Armenia.<sup>65</sup> The three identical sides would then be the north, the south, and the east; the west side would differ in having doors rather than an apse. This type of church would also provide another interpretation of the “other arches” mentioned in strophe 8; they would be the three half-domes upon which the central dome was supported.

*the form of the three . . . Trinity is one:*

The number three served to remind many early Christian authors of the Trinity, from Theophilus of Antioch to Augustine and Jacob of Sarug.<sup>66</sup> Theophilus, in his description of the creation of the world, says, “the three days prior to the luminaries are types of the triad of God and his Logos and his Sophia.”<sup>67</sup> In a similar context, his homilies in Hexaemeron, Jacob of Sarug reflects on the Nicene Trinity in a manner analogous to the hymn’s: “The number three . . . is as fair as the first number, and it resembles it and comes from it and stands firm and exists. Three is one and thus also three are one. One is Being Itself (*ūthyā*) and one is the Trinity.”<sup>68</sup>

#### STRS. 13–14.

*One light shines forth . . . by three open windows:*

The light shining through three windows as symbolic of the Trinity has partial parallels in Ephrem the Syrian, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Stephen bar Sudaili. Ephrem used the image of light or fire, heat and light, to represent the Trinity.<sup>69</sup> Grabar noted that Pseudo-Dionysius used the idea of light shining through several windows, yet remaining one.<sup>70</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius did not, how-

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 47. Grabar brings the Armenian churches back into the discussion as useful examples of the dome unsupported by columns, but rejects their plan and façade as a parallel to the church at Edessa, *ibid.*, 51. The reasoning seems circular. The possibility of Armenian architectural parallels is especially intriguing given the symbolic interpretation of church buildings in Armenian literature; see Thomson, “Architectural Symbolism” (*supra*, note 3).

<sup>66</sup> The number three as symbolic of the Trinity is simply taken for granted by Augustine, cf. G. Bonner, “Augustine as Biblical Scholar,” *Cambridge History of the Bible*, I, eds. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge, 1970), 541–63, esp. 560.

<sup>67</sup> *Ad Autolycum* 15, ed. and trans. R. M. Grant, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford, 1970), 52 f: καὶ αἱ τρεῖς ἡμέραι πόδι τῶν φωστήρων γενονται τύποι εἰσὶν τῆς τριάδος, τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ λόγου αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς σοφίας αὐτοῦ.

<sup>68</sup> *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis* (Paris-Leipzig, 1905–1910), 3, 141–42; cf. Jansma, “Hexameron” (*supra*, note 36), 40 f.

<sup>69</sup> *Hymnes de fide* 13.5 and 40.9–10. For discussion of the imagery, cf. E. Beck, “Symbolum” (*supra*, note 19), 19–40.

<sup>70</sup> *De divin. nominibus* II, 4; cf. Grabar, “Le témoignage,” 56.

ever, relate this notion to the Trinity. An instance of imagery very similar to Pseudo-Dionysius' occurs in the *Book of the Holy Hierotheos* IV, 21: "For as at the time of sunrise, there may be found some wall facing the east, and therein, in turn, be many windows distinct from each other; in proportion to their multitude they also distribute the rays of the sun in separate beams, and the rays are numbered in proportion to the distinction of the windows. But if thou remove the essence (*οὐσία*) which causes distinctions, then all the separated rays return to be commingled in each other and in the essence that produced them."<sup>71</sup>

#### STR. 13.

*the mystery of the Trinity, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit:*

For Ephrem the names of the Trinity are veiled revelations, or, as both he and the author of the hymn would express this notion, they are "mysteries" (*râzê*).<sup>72</sup>

#### STR. 15.

*ambo:*

As described here, the ambo (*bêma*) functioned as in Byzantine liturgical usage, i.e., it is a raised platform used only for chanting of litanies and readings, not for the seating of the clergy as in the East Syrian liturgical tradition.<sup>73</sup> This is clear because the altar and certainly the *σύνθηκον* are not on the *bêma* (cf. str. 18, 19).

... the Upper Room at Zion . . . the eleven apostles that were hidden:

The allusion to the Upper Room and to the eleven hidden apostles suggests Acts 1:13 ff., the Pentecost narrative, or, more strongly, John 20:19 ff., which is also a commissioning of the apostles. In either case the emphasis is on apostolic and hence episcopal authority. Mark 14:15 ff. and parallels might suggest a eucharistic interpretation for the Upper Room, but there are twelve apostles present, and they are not in hiding.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Book of Hierotheos*, ed. Marsh, 126 trans., 114 text. Further on Stephen bar Sudaili, cf. remarks on strophe 19 *infra*.

<sup>72</sup> For examples and discussion, cf. Beck, "Symbolum," esp. 35–37.

<sup>73</sup> For a review of the discussion and selected recent literature, cf. R. F. Taft, "Some Notes on the Bema in the East and West Syrian Traditions," *OCP*, 34 (1968), 326–359, esp. 349. Grabar and Smith assumed that the East Syrian type of *bêma* was meant here, cf. Grabar, "Le témoignage," 63, and Smith, *Dome*, 137, 143 f., 149 f.

<sup>74</sup> Pace Smith, *Dome*, 137, 143 f., 149 f.

#### STR. 16.

*column . . . portrays Golgotha:*

The placement of a cross on a pillar behind the ambo (or *bêma*) is unattested in literary sources for the Byzantine and East and West Syrian liturgical traditions.<sup>75</sup> The Byzantine and West Syrian traditions placed the cross with the altar in the sanctuary (in the apse), while the East Syrians placed both on the *bêma* in the center of the church and thus at the symbolic center of the earth. These are the arrangements described by the eleventh-century Monophysite Yahya Ibn Jarir: "Le bîma, c'est-à-dire l'ambon (*al-manbar*) qui est au centre de la nef est la figure du Temple (*bayt al-maqdes*) qui se trouve au centre de la terre, et il est la figure du lieu où notre Seigneur a été crucifié. Il est connu [sous le nom] de Golgotha, [ce lieu] ou la tête de notre père Adam était enterrée. . . . La croix qui se trouve sur le bîma, les Nestoriens l'y placent pour symboliser la crucifixion du Christ sur le Golgotha. La placer, d'après les autres confessions et sectes, sur l'autel, au sanctuaire, symbolise le Christ."<sup>76</sup>

The three liturgical traditions agree with the hymn in associating cross, altar or *bêma* with Golgotha, though the Nestorian liturgical arrangement is most compatible with their cosmological interpretation of Golgotha: "The temple then is the whole world. The *bêma* that is in the middle of the temple is the place of Jerusalem that is in the middle of the earth. The altar that is in the middle of the *bêma* fills the place of Golgotha."<sup>77</sup>

An earlier literary tradition underlies the interest of the liturgical commentaries in Golgotha. Cyril of Jerusalem interpreted Ps. 74:12, "Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth," to mean that Golgotha was the center of the earth, thereby emphasizing the cosmic dimension of the death of Christ (Cat. 13.28). This notion occurs also in the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*, a fifth- or sixth-century work, which adds that the skull for which Golgotha was named is Adam's skull, thus concretizing the second-Adam theme of Cy-

<sup>75</sup> The written record may be in disagreement with the archaeological record on this point, cf. Grabar, "Le témoignage," 63 f.

<sup>76</sup> G. Khouri Sarkis, "Le Livre du Guide de Yahya Ibn Jarir," *OrSyr*, 12 (1967), 303–54, 421–80; contains French translation from the Arabic of chaps. 29–31; passages quoted are chap. 29.11 ad 29.23, pp. 325, 328. For a sketch of the arrangement of the Nestorian church, cf. R. H. Connolly, ed. and trans., *Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae*, CSCO, 64 (= Scr. Syr. 25,28 = I), 72 (= Scr. Syr. 29, 32 = II) (Paris, 1911–15), I, 196–7 (trans.).

<sup>77</sup> Connolly, *op. cit.*, I, 114 text.

ril's comments (cf. Cat. 13.28). The Edessa Hymn shows awareness neither of this cosmic interpretation nor even of the second-Adam theme in relation to Golgotha.

*our Lord between the thieves:*

The new Testament tradition of the two thieves crucified on either side of Jesus (Mark 15:27 and parallels) and especially the story of the forgiveness of the "good thief" (Luke 23:39–43) play a significant role in Syriac liturgical and literary traditions. Yahya Ibn Jarir (cited above) continues: "Les deux flabelles placés à droite et à gauche [de l'autel] représentent les deux personnes crucifiées avec lui [le Christ]. On dit aussi qu'ils figurent les deux chérubins qui étaient dans le sanctuaire des Israélites."<sup>78</sup> That the "good thief" was first to enter Paradise is a favorite theme in Ephrem's Diatessaron commentary; he managed even to wring from it another of his favorite themes, the rejection of the Jews.<sup>79</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem used the thief who is saved as an example of grace.<sup>80</sup> Closer to the chronological and geographical setting of the Edessa Hymn, Jacob of Sarug employed the example of the good thief to refute the argument of the Origenist Stephen bar Sudaili against eternal rewards and punishments.<sup>81</sup> Stephen himself interpreted this passage allegorically.<sup>82</sup> For him, the three crosses represent the three essences which comprise a human being: body, soul, and spirit. Although all three are crucified, the one in the middle (the mind) and the one on the right (the soul) live; only the body dies. Against this, Jacob emphasized the literal and moral interpretation of the thief as paradigmatic of the free grace of salvation. In his *sôgîthâ* of the cherubim and the thief, Jacob emphasized, as Cyril had, the paradoxical working of grace which admits the thief to Paradise even before the prophets and leaders of the Old Testament.<sup>83</sup> Again, the Edessa Hymn shows no awareness of the broader tradition on the thieves.

<sup>78</sup>Loc. cit. (*supra*, note 76).

<sup>79</sup>R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge, Eng., 1975), 64, 258.

<sup>80</sup>Catecheses, 13.30–31.

<sup>81</sup>For the text and translation of the letter, cf. A. L. Frothingham, *Stephen bar Sudaili, the Syrian mystic and the Book of Hierotheos* (Leyden, 1886), 10–27; reedited by G. Olinder, CSCO, 110, Scr. Syr. 57 (Paris, 1937), 2–11. For discussion, cf. Guillau-mont, *Kephalaia et l'Origénisme* (*supra*, note 42), 302 ff.

<sup>82</sup>Marsh, ed., trans., *Book of Hierotheos* II, 20–22.

<sup>83</sup>Trans. F. Graffin, "La soghita du Cherubin et du Larron," *OrChr*, 12 (1967), 481–90. This hymn became a regular part of the Syriac Paschal Vigil, cf. *ibid.*

## STR. 17.

*five doors:*

Goussen argued that there were three doors in the east façade, one each in the south and west façades.<sup>84</sup> Mango suggested five doors on the west or three on the west with one each on north and south.<sup>85</sup> Others have declined to comment on this issue, which is particularly difficult if strophe 12 is taken literally.<sup>86</sup>

*like the virgins to the bridal couch of light:*

The allusion is to the five wise virgins of Mt. 25:1–13. Goussen's printed text erroneously reads *legyon* instead of *lagnôn*, though his translation, "ins Lichtgemach," reflects my reading of the text.<sup>87</sup> Dupont-Sommer followed Goussen's text rather than correcting it and so arrived at the erroneous translation, "troupe lumineuse."<sup>88</sup> The correct reading attests one of the more typically Syriac themes of the hymn, the "bridal couch of light," a symbol both of the baptistery and of heaven in Syriac literature from the *Acts of Thomas* to Ephrem and Narsai.<sup>89</sup> The bridal chamber appears as an eschatological symbol in the Manichaean and Gnostic literature as well.<sup>90</sup> Greek Christian writers from the New Testament onward, especially in the Alexandrian tradition, applied nuptial imagery to the relation between the individual soul and Christ or between a pre-existent or personified Church and Christ.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>84</sup>Goussen, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 3), 6 f.

<sup>85</sup>Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire* (*supra*, note 3), 59.

<sup>86</sup>Schneider's diagram, *op. cit.*, (*supra*, note 3), 167, bears no indication of doors; Dupont-Sommer explicitly declines placing the doors, *op. cit.*, 38. Further, cf. our discussion of strophe 12 *supra*.

<sup>87</sup>Goussen, *op. cit.*, 119, 121.

<sup>88</sup>Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 3), 38.

<sup>89</sup>For specific citations, cf. A. F. J. Klijn, *The Act of Thomas* (Leiden, 1962), 173 f., and for further related material, 67 f., 71, 168–79, 192–95. For a similar reference in another fifth-century Syriac composition written for the rededication of a church building, cf. Appendix 3.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid. The Greek version of the *Acts of Thomas* is a Gnostic document, and the original Syriac version may also have been Gnostic. On the versions and Gnosticism, cf. Klijn, *op. cit.*, 1–16; G. Bornkamm, "Acts of Thomas," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia, 1965), II, 425–41, with postscript by D. Georgi, 441 f. The debate over the nature of early Syriac Christianity need not detain us here. For a balanced account of the problem in Edessa, cf. H. J. W. Drijvers, "Edessa und das jüdische Christentum," *VChr* 24 (1970), 4–33; for discussion of the issue of Syriac Christian origins in Adiabene as well, cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 4–24.

<sup>91</sup>Cf. note 173 *infra*.

## STR. 18.

*the Cherubim of its altar:*

The “Cherubim of its altar” was probably a ciborium over the altar adorned with carved depictions of a pair of cherubim. A ciborium or baldachino is a free-standing canopy, either flat or curved, erected over a throne, altar, tomb, ambo, stream, or pool.<sup>92</sup> The ciborium occurs in ancient Near Eastern contexts (Iran, Babylonia, Egypt, Israel) as well as in Hellenistic, Roman, and Early Christian settings, and has cosmological and sacred connotations, essentially indicating that the person or object beneath is representative of the ruler of the cosmos.<sup>93</sup> Early pictorial representations in a Christian context show the ciborium bedecked with flowers, plants, and birds.<sup>94</sup> However, an illustration of the Ark of the Covenant in the *Topography of Cosmos* Indicopleustes shows a ciborium surmounted by two cherubim.<sup>95</sup> Two sources (one approximately contemporaneous with Cosmas, the other from the twelfth century) attest that cherubim adorned the ciboria over altars in northern Mesopotamian Christian churches: A description of a church at Qartamin mentions the figure of a cherub over the altar (or perhaps over the bishop’s throne);<sup>96</sup> and an account of the Muslim capture of the Jacobite church of St. Jacob in Aleppo alludes to the destruction not only of the altar and of the icons but also of the figures of cherubim above the altar.<sup>97</sup> The Edessa Hymn’s reference to the “cherubim of the altar” probably indicates that a

<sup>92</sup> For definition, cf. Krautheimer, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 2), 541; more extensively, T. Klauser, “Ciborium,” *RAC*, III (1955), 68–86.

<sup>93</sup> Klauser, *op. cit.*

<sup>94</sup> T. Klauser, “Das Ciborium in der älteren christlichen Buchmalerei,” *NachrGött* (1961), no. 7, 191–207; repr., with some remarks on further bibliography, in *JbAChr*, Suppl. 3 (1974), 314–27.

<sup>95</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie Chrétienne*, ed., trans., intro., and notes by W. Wolska-Conus, SC, 141, 159, 197 (Paris, 1968, 1970, 1973), II, 64 ff. (illustration accompanying Bk. V, 36); a similar structure, though without the cherubim, takes the place of the Tabernacle in the Sinai MS at Bk. V, 55, cf. *ibid.*, I, 195 (fig. 10). Grabar noted this parallel and assumed, perhaps too readily, that Cosmas’ illustration shows the placement of cherubim above Christian church altars in the sixth century, cf. Grabar, “Le témoignage,” 64 note 3.

<sup>96</sup> From the reign of Emperor Anastasius (491–518 C.E.), cf. E. Sachau, *Verzeichnis der syrischen Hss. der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1899), 585; it is cited by Goussen, *op. cit.*, 123 note 11, who dismisses the possibility that the cherubim are actually above the throne, i.e., the bishop’s chair. This may be too hasty a conflation of the evidence, cf. note 105 *infra*.

<sup>97</sup> I. E. Rahmani, “Ein Blatt aus der Geschichte der Kirchen Aleppos im Mittelalter,” *ThGl*, 4 (1912), 268; again, cited by Goussen, *op. cit.*, 123 note 11.

ciborium supported by ten columns and ornamented with carved representations of a pair of cherubim was erected over the altar.<sup>98</sup>

*ten apostles . . . who fled:*

The misprint in Goussen’s Syriac text (*danraqw* instead of *da’raqw*) misled Dupont-Sommer into an ingenious but erroneous translation.<sup>99</sup> The allusion is to Mark 14:50 ff. and parallels, combined with John 19:26, assuming the popular identification of the apostle John with the “beloved disciple.”

## STR. 19.

*nine orders of angels:*

The earliest references to a ninefold angelology in extant Christian literature are in John Chrysostom’s *Homily on Genesis* and in the fifth of the *Mystagogical Catecheses* attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem.<sup>100</sup> It is possible that these two examples are indicative of a broader acceptance of a ninefold angelology in the late fourth or early fifth century. Best known to modern scholars is the ninefold angelology of Pseudo-Dionysius, who used the same names for the angelic orders as the earlier examples but modified their sequence and fitted them into the triadic framework of his neo-Platonic system.<sup>101</sup> The *Book of the Holy Hierotheos*, a Syriac work

<sup>98</sup> This is Grabar’s conclusion and it seems most plausible. Basing his view on the ongoing practice of the Armenian Church and the restored practice of the Syrians, Goussen had argued that a curtain embroidered with cherubim was meant, *op. cit.*, 123 note 11. For some evidence in favor of Goussen’s hypothesis, cf. W. Cramer, *Die Engelvorstellungen bei Ephräm dem Syrer*, OCA, 173 (Rome, 1965), 172, and R. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and other Pre-anaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, OCA, 200 (Rome, 1975), 39 note 95. For the roots and symbolic significance of such a curtain, cf. T. Klauser, “Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes,” *JbAChr*, 3 (1960), 141 f.; repr. in *ibid.*, Suppl. 3 (1974), 218–20 with brief response to O. Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes. Eine exegetisch-religionswissenschaftliche Untersuchung zu Hebr. 6,19f und 10,19f*, WUNT, 14 (Tübingen, 1972), q.v.

<sup>99</sup> Goussen, *op. cit.*, 119, 121; Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, 38.

<sup>100</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Gen.* IV,5 (PG, 53–54, 44) and Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 23,6 (PG, 33, 1113B). For critical edition of the latter, cf. *Catéchèses Mystagogiques*, Introduction, texte critique et notes de A. Piédagnel, traduction de P. Paris, SC, 126 (Paris, 1966), 152–55; discussion of authorship and date of the mystagogical catecheses by Piédagnel, 21–40. Both Chrysostom and Cyril are cited by R. Roques in “Pierre l’Ibérien et le Corpus dionysien,” *RHR*, 145 (1954), 69–98, esp. 87–96.

<sup>101</sup> *Hier. Cael.* VI,2. For a general discussion of the angelology of Pseudo-Dionysius, cf. R. Roques, *L’univers dionysien* (Paris, 1954), 135–67. For comparison with the earlier examples, cf. *idem*, “Pierre l’Ibérien,” 87–96. Grabar considered the hymn’s reference to a ninefold angelology a clear indication of dependence on the Pseudo-Dionysian literature, cf. “Le témoignage,” 56.

of the early sixth century, attributed to Stephen bar Sudaili, also presumes a ninefold angelology.<sup>102</sup> Although this work was put into final form and entitled by someone familiar with the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, the background of the bulk of the work is the *Kephalia Gnostica* of the Origenist, Evagrius of Pontus.<sup>103</sup> The reference in the Edessa Hymn is too general to determine literary dependence on any of these earlier works.<sup>104</sup> It is most likely that all are indebted to a broader tradition of liturgical and exegetical interpretation.

*throne of Christ . . . angels:*

Ezekiel 1:1–26, which portrays God enthroned above the cherubim, was interpreted by early Christians to imply that Christ was enthroned above the cherubim after the ascension.<sup>105</sup> The arrangement of the Edessa Hymn seems at first to conflict with this tradition, since the cherubim are associated with the altar while Christ is enthroned above the nine orders of angels rather than only above the cherubim. By the fourth century, however, it was commonplace to identify the altar with the throne of Christ.<sup>106</sup> The hymn's portrayal apparently results from acceptance of this identity combined with the development of a ninefold angelology. The hymn's conception is not readily identifiable with a particular line of exegesis.

STR. 20.

*heaven and earth:*

In an Antiochene exegetical tradition this expression is the equivalent of “the cosmos.” In the sixth-century Alexandrian Christian framework, with its Ptolemaic cosmology, “heaven” alone would be the cosmos, since it would be understood as a sphere enclosing the earth and the space around it.<sup>107</sup> The hymn's meaning here is closer to the Antiochene tradition.

<sup>102</sup> Marsh, ed., trans., *Book of Hierotheos*, I, 10–12; on Stephen as the author, cf. 222–32.

<sup>103</sup> Guillaumont, *Kephalia et l'Origénisme*, 302–32, esp. 318 ff.; also Guillaumont, “Etienne bar Soudaili,” in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris, 1961), col. 1487.

<sup>104</sup> Even the rejection of nine spheres and nine heavens by later Antiochenes such as Cosmas Indicopleustes cannot provide a criterion of literary dependence, since rejection of nine spheres or heavens does not necessarily imply rejection of nine orders of angels; cf. Wolska, *Topographie* (*supra*, note 25), 88 note 2, 103 note 1, 169, 201.

<sup>105</sup> This interpretation appears in Philo, Irenaeus, and Ephrem; since it is not prominent in Clement or Origen, Cramer concludes that it is a Syrian rather than an Alexandrian tradition; cf. Cramer, *Engelvorstellungen*, 102 f., 132–34. Further, cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), 655b.

<sup>106</sup> T. Klauser, “Altar,” *RAC*, 1, 353.

<sup>107</sup> Wolska, *Topographie*, 138, 173.

STR. 21.

*apostles . . . and prophets and martyrs:*

As in strophe 14, the leaders of the church are represented by parts of the church building.<sup>108</sup>

#### IV. The Building

The church building described by the hymn was destroyed in 1031 C.E.<sup>109</sup> Archeological exploration of the site has not yet been permitted. In contrast to the architecture of the Syrian countryside, the ecclesiastical architecture of major cities like Edessa is relatively unknown.<sup>110</sup> In the absence of external evidence about the architecture of the church, reconstruction of the plan of the church building is dependent only on the sparse data within the hymn. A precise reconstruction of the architecture of the church would be useful in two respects: first, in determining whether the background of the building is primarily Justinianic imperial architecture or regional Syrian architecture; second, in determining the applicability of the hymn's symbolism to other Byzantine churches.

Two types of church have been proposed as most compatible with the hymn's description.<sup>111</sup> Schneider suggested that the cathedral was a cruciform church with a central dome and arched, not domed, ceilings in the shallow arms of the cross.<sup>112</sup> Grabar argued for a substantial modification of this reconstruction.<sup>113</sup> In his view the church was of the cross-in-square type.<sup>114</sup> He conjectured that massive exterior walls enclosed the cruciform inner structure of the church. By means of squinches, these exterior walls supported a single dome which covered the entire church.<sup>115</sup> From the exterior, the church

<sup>108</sup> Further on this theme and its roots, cf. note 11 *supra* and note 176 *infra*.

<sup>109</sup> Goussen, *op. cit.*, 133.

<sup>110</sup> Krautheimer, *op. cit.*, 147.

<sup>111</sup> These reconstructions are based primarily on the information in strophes 5–8, 12–13, 17 of the hymn; cf. the commentary on those strophes for a more detailed discussion.

<sup>112</sup> Schneider, *op. cit.*, (*supra*, note 3), 166 f., with a plan, fig. 2, 167. He suggests the Church of Mary at Farqīn as a parallel, cf. G. L. Bell, *Churches and Monasteries of the Tūr Abdin*, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Architektur*, Suppl. 9 (Heidelberg, 1913), 88, fig. 28.

<sup>113</sup> Grabar, “Le témoignage” (*supra*, note 3), 44–51.

<sup>114</sup> Among others, Grabar cites the example of St. Clement at Ankara, cf. Krautheimer, *op. cit.*, 302, fig. 249.

<sup>115</sup> Since the dome was stone, Grabar's reconstruction requires that the overall dimensions of the building be fairly small—a requirement which is, as he noted, not incompatible with the Arab reckoning of the church as one of the wonders of the world, since architectural wondrousness flows neither solely nor necessarily from magnitude; cf. Grabar, “Le témoignage,” 41, 47 f.

would have the appearance of a simple cube surmounted by a dome, although the interior would be more complex.

It has been generally accepted that, given the inadequacies of the hymn's description of the building, Grabar's reconstruction is a reasonable proposal.<sup>116</sup> But it remains a hypothetical reconstruction and is not without difficulties.<sup>117</sup> In the wealth of architectural forms of the East Syrian environment there are likely to be other solutions which are equally feasible.<sup>118</sup> As Schneider wrote in 1941, the most sensible solution to this problem would be an excavation of the probable site of the building.<sup>119</sup> But this possibility apparently remains as remote now as when he raised the issue almost half a century ago.

## V. Historical Setting and Date

The church described in the hymn is the so-called "Great Church."<sup>120</sup> The *Chronicle of Edessa* reports that its construction was begun in 313 C.E. and completed in 325–328 C.E.<sup>121</sup> The church building was destroyed by the fourth recorded flood of the Daisan (Skirtos) River in April 525 and was rebuilt with the financial assistance of the Emperor Justinian.<sup>122</sup> Amidonius, mentioned in the second strophe of the hymn, is apparently identical with Amazon, mentioned by Jacob of Edessa as the thirty-eighth bishop of Edessa; according to Michael the Syrian, the Chalcedonian Bishop Amazon "rebuilt and decorated the Great Church."<sup>123</sup> The present

<sup>116</sup> Full acceptance by Smith, in *Dome* (*supra*, note 2), 91, citing Grabar's statement that the Edessa Church is "du type 'carré dans carré' ou en croix inscrite," in *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols. and plates (Paris, 1946), I, 327. Partial or hesitant acceptance in Wolska, *Topographie*, 296, where she assumes that the church is on a square rather than rectangular plan (and has a dome) and is therefore incompatible with the drawings of Cosmas Indicopleustes; Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire* (*supra*, note 3), 60 note 13, agrees that the "other arches" of strophe 8 are "probably" squinches, but does not treat the dome and ceiling of strophes 5 and 6 as identical; Krautheimer, *op. cit.*, 253, says the plan of the cathedral of Edessa was "apparently" of the type "of a domed cross enclosed in a square and resting on the walls of corner chambers."

<sup>117</sup> They are discussed in the comments on strophes 5–8, 12–13, and 17, *supra*.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Krautheimer, *op. cit.*, 143–65, 271–86.

<sup>119</sup> Schneider, *op. cit.*, 167.

<sup>120</sup> It is to be distinguished from the "Savior Church" also known as the "Old Church" of Edessa; cf. Goussen, *op. cit.*, 123 ff. For the probable site of the church, cf. Segal, *Edessa* (*supra*, note 15), Plan I, 262 f.

<sup>121</sup> Goussen, *op. cit.*, 125 f.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>123</sup> The identification was suggested by Goussen, *op. cit.*, 128 f. and has been generally accepted. It is based on the witness of

hymn appears to be the foundation hymn sung on the occasion of the dedication of the new building, an event which probably took place about the middle of the sixth century.<sup>124</sup>

In order to ascertain an appropriate literary environment for the hymn, it is important to look more closely at the contemporaneous ecclesiastical politics.<sup>125</sup> Christological allegiances shifted rapidly in the turbulent atmosphere of sixth-century Edessa. Paul, Bishop of Edessa from 501 to 519 C.E., had written to Flavian, Patriarch of Antioch, assuring him of his acceptance of the "synod of Chalcedon." When Severus succeeded Flavian as Patriarch of Antioch, however, he demanded Paul's retraction of the statement of allegiance to Chalcedon, and Paul complied. Paul of Edessa remained faithful to the Monophysite position during the persecutions which followed Severus' deposition.<sup>126</sup> Twice exiled for his Monophysite allegiance, Paul was replaced during his second exile by Asclepios bar Malaha. A zealous Chalcedonian, Bishop Asclepios participated in the general persecution of Monophysites in the east. A Monophysite source claims that God's wrath at Asclepios' persecution of a group of monks was the cause of the great flood which eliminated one third of the population and destroyed all the major buildings of Edessa in April 525.<sup>127</sup>

two primary sources: Jacob of Edessa in *Chronica Minora*, ed. E. W. Brooks, I. Guidi, and I.-B. Chabot, pt. 3, CSCO, 5 (Louvain, 1905), 321 text, 243 trans.; and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. J. B. Chabot (Paris, 1901), II, 246b. Michael's reference is to the twenty-fifth year of Justinian, the twenty-second year of Chosroes of Persia, which means Amazon became the thirty-eighth bishop in 543. Cameron asserts that Jacob of Edessa implies a date of 553–560, but her reasons are not clear. Coupled with the date of 554 for Procopius' *On Buildings*, which mentions the rebuilt church, this gives her a date of 553/54 for the reconstruction; cf. Cameron, "Shroud" (*supra*, note 4), 23 f. and note 46. My own estimate would be broader, between 543 and 554.

<sup>124</sup> This is the date and setting of the hymn suggested by Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, 29, whereas in his portion of their joint article Grabar argued for a late seventh-century date, "Le témoignage," 58 *et passim*. Grabar's dating has been widely accepted, but it is erroneous, as Cameron argues, in "Shroud," esp. 23 f. and note 46, and as the present article is intended to demonstrate. Further on Grabar's theory concerning literary dependency and dating, cf. Appendix 1 of this article.

<sup>125</sup> The following reconstruction of events is based on E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêches Monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, CSCO, 127 (Louvain, 1951), 48 ff.; J. Lebon, *Le Monophysisme sévérien* (Louvain, 1909), 39 ff.; and Segal, *Edessa*, 93–103.

<sup>126</sup> For a balanced view of Justin's persecution of the Monophysites, using both Chalcedonian and Monophysite sources, cf. A. A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First: An Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great*, DOS, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), 221–41.

<sup>127</sup> Segal, *Edessa*, 96 f.

Perhaps Asclepios believed in his own culpability for this disaster; or perhaps the anger of a disgruntled Monophysite populace in search of a scapegoat was sufficient to dampen his enthusiasm for the episcopacy. Whatever his reasons, Asclepios fled, and Justinian accepted Paul's reappointment as Bishop of Edessa. Paul was required first to accept the "synod of Chalcedon," and his final stint as Bishop of Edessa lasted only a few months, until his death in October 526.<sup>128</sup> So while his reinstatement constituted a moral victory for the Monophysite cause, it was a limited and temporary success.

Asclepios had also died in 526, so Justinian appointed a new bishop, Amazon.<sup>129</sup> Information about Bishop Amazon is quite meager. Even precise dates for his episcopacy are lacking. We know only that he was an adherent of the Chalcedonian formula and that he supervised the reconstruction of the church building. From Procopius' account it is clear that the restoration of the church was an important aspect of a major building program financed by Justinian and apparently begun immediately after the flood; even the diversion of the course of the river for the sake of preventing future floods was included in the task assigned to the imperial engineers.<sup>130</sup>

Although Justinian made some unsuccessful attempts at reconciliation with the Monophysites in 531 and 535–536 at Constantinople, the Monophysite Christology was definitively condemned in 536 at the Council of Constantinople.<sup>131</sup> This decision was followed by the most severe persecutions of the Monophysites under Severus' third successor at Antioch, Patriarch Ephrem bar Afyana, a native of Amida. Patriarch Ephrem visited several cities in the East during the winter of 536–537, Edessa among them.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, the Monophysites continued to rely on the Empress Theodora for assistance, and in 542 she saw to the consecration of Jacob Baradaeus as Bishop of Edessa. The assiduous labors of Jacob Baradaeus, Theodore of Arabia, and Theodosius of Alexandria resulted in the successful reestablishment of a Monophysite hierarchy and priesthood throughout the East.<sup>133</sup> Still, Jacob Baradaeus never sat openly on the episcopal throne of Edessa, and his

revived church was, as Honigmann has said, "une communauté illégale de fidèles qui s'opposait secrètement à l'Église chalcédonienne, qui jouissait, elle, des faveurs du pouvoir et était fermement établie dans tous les évêchés de l'empire."<sup>134</sup> So we may surmise that as the middle of the sixth century drew near, there was an official attitude of inflexible adherence to the Chalcedonian formula, though this may have been coupled with an uneasy awareness that the Monophysite Church, far from being dead, had become a powerful underground force.

Other theological and even cosmological disputes of the time were closely related to the Christological controversies. The Emperor Justinian issued a decree anathematizing certain opinions of Origen in January 543.<sup>135</sup> The following year, at the prompting of two Monophysites who were also Origenists, Theodore Askidas and Domitian of Ancyra, Justinian issued a second decree, this one against the "Three Chapters," certain writings of Ibas of Edessa and of Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and the substance of the Christological opinions of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Theodore of Mopsuestia was not only the most important representative of the Antiochene, "Diophysite" Christology, but also the primary opponent of the allegorical method of exegesis as practiced at Alexandria especially since the time of Origen.<sup>136</sup>

A decade after these imperial decrees, the Council of Constantinople in 553 condemned both Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia. In the intervening years, in Alexandria at least, the debate shifted from Christology to cosmology. Cosmas Indicopleustes undertook the defense of Theodore's theological system without mentioning his name and without emphasizing Christology. Instead he argued for the Antiochene cosmological system for which he claimed Scriptural authority, and he flatly stated that those who did not subscribe to this cosmology

<sup>128</sup> Honigmann, *op. cit.*, 49 f.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 50 note 1.

<sup>130</sup> *On Buildings*, II, 7,6.

<sup>131</sup> Honigmann, *op. cit.*, 149–52.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 157–245.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>135</sup> In general on the Origenistic Controversies, cf. F. Diekamp, *Die Origenistische Streitigkeiten im sechsten Jahrhundert und das fünfte allgemeine Concil* (Münster, 1899); especially for the relation between the Origenistic controversies of the fourth and the sixth centuries, cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia et l'Origenisme*, and for the date given, *ibid.*, 132.

<sup>136</sup> On the "collusion" of Origenists and Monophysites against the tradition of Theodore of Mopsuestia, cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia et l'Origenisme*, esp. 128–36, 173–75. On the theology of Theodore himself, cf. R. Devreesse, *Essai sur Theodore de Mopsueste* (hereafter, *Essai*), ST, 141 (Vatican, 1948); and on Theodore's general principles of biblical interpretation, cf. M. F. Wiles, "Theodore of Mopsuestia as Representative of the Antiochene School," *Cambridge History of the Bible*, I (Cambridge, 1970), 489–509.

were not really Christians. Cosmas' opponent in the debate was John Philoponus, a Monophysite and proponent of the Ptolemaic cosmology, whom Cosmas accused of Origenism.<sup>137</sup>

Reverberations of every aspect of these theological discussions were felt in Edessa. The Christological issues and the competing exegetical traditions which constituted their background, Origenism, and cosmological speculation were all part of the intellectual environment of Syriac-speaking Christians in the early sixth century. In general, the discussion at Edessa and in its environs was less sophisticated than in Alexandria, but all the same issues were there. Occasionally the peculiar intellectual history of Edessa and its surroundings—a combination of exposure to many ideas with provincial lack of sophistication—allowed for the intermingling of ideas that were theoretically incompatible. In the case of the Edessa Hymn, this confusion produced a striking architectural symbol. In order to trace this development we must first consider the literary genre of the hymn.

## VI. Literary Analysis

### a. Structure of the Hymn

In general structure, the hymn falls into three main sections: (1) introduction (strophes 1–4), (2) main body (strophes 5–19), and (3) closing (strophes 20–22). The introductory section begins with an invocation of divine aid (str. 1). The foundation information follows (str. 2), presented typologically in anticipation of the main theme. That is, Moses, Bezalel, and the Tabernacle are types for Amidoniūs, the bishop, for Asaph and Addai, the architects, and for the church building, respectively. Since the Tabernacle was understood, as we shall see, as a cosmological symbol, this typology is also an anticipation of the main theme. That theme is presented in the following two strophes: the building represents, on the one hand, the mysteries of the Godhead and the economy of salvation, and, on the other hand, the cosmos (strs. 3–4).

The central portion of the hymn (strs. 5–19) is at once a symbolic interpretation of the architectural details of the building in accordance with the announced theme and an elaboration of cosmological and ecclesiological dimensions of the theme. The symbolic interpretation of the building pro-

ceeds from the cosmological theme first to the Tabernacle, then to the Trinity, and finally to the earthly dispensation of the Savior and his exaltation. Specifically, architectural features are related to heaven, earth, and the sun, i.e., the cosmos, in strophes 5–9,<sup>138</sup> to the Tabernacle in strophes 10–11, and to the Trinity in strophes 12–13. Strophes 14–19 relate architectural and liturgical features to the Dispensation of Christ, his prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, ending with the image of the exalted Christ enthroned above the nine orders of angels.

The description of the architectural features proceeds generally, but not exclusively, from the higher parts of the building to the lower and then to the major liturgical furnishings. Strophes 5–10 concern the ceiling, dome, and arches, but also the marble revetment of the walls. Strophes 11–14 pertain to the courts, façades, and the windows of the sanctuary and façades. Strophes 15–19 touch upon the major liturgical furnishings of the building: ambo, altar, and σύνθρονος. The doors, also included here, might be considered to have a liturgical function if processions enter through them. The fact that the hymn is an alphabetical acrostic probably accounts for its rather haphazard approach to describing the building.

The final three strophes constitute a mirror-image of the first four. So the twentieth strophe recapitulates the main theme, that the building represents the cosmos and the Godhead both in Itself and in relation to the world. The ecclesiological dimension of the theme is given emphasis in the following strophe (21a). Finally, the invocation of the first strophe is mirrored by the prayer for protection in the last verses (strs. 21b–22).

### b. Genre of the Hymn

Both known manuscripts, which date to the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively, classify the Edessa hymn as a *sôgîthâ* (plural *sôgyâthâ*).<sup>139</sup> This is not the hymn in the form of a dramatic dialogue that is discussed in the standard histories of Syriac literature under this title. It belongs instead to the type of *sôgîthâ* commonly found in the Maronite daily office. Like many *sôgyâthâ* of this type, the Edessa Hymn is in the form of an alphabetical acrostic; its twenty-two strophes begin with the

<sup>138</sup>Cf. note 107 *supra*.

<sup>139</sup>For a discussion of this genre and its characteristics, cf. Appendix 2. For information on the MSS and their dating, cf. note 6 *supra*.

<sup>137</sup>Wolska, *Topographie*, esp. 63 ff., 191 f.

consecutive letters of the Syriac alphabet. Each strophe of the Edessa Hymn has four hemistichs, each of which has, in turn, eight syllables. This is the meter which G. Khouri-Sarkis named the “Maronite meter,” except that each strophe has twice the number of syllables as the usual Maronite *sâgithâ*.<sup>140</sup>

In a broader sense the hymn on the Church of Edessa may be appropriately characterized as architectural θεωρία, a contemplation of the church building.<sup>141</sup> The fundamental theological postulate underlying the hymn is that God is a mystery, who is both revealed and hidden (str. 3). Although beyond the comprehension of creatures, God may be truly known if approached through three modes of contemplation: (1) theological: the Godhead in Itself, the Trinity (strs. 12–13); (2) Scriptural: God as Savior revealed in the Bible (strs. 11, 14–19); (3) cosmological: God as Creator revealed through the creation (strs. 4–8). Each of these three ways of contemplating the mysterious God is accessible through the contemplation of the church building (strs. 3, 20–21). Consideration of each of the architectural features of the building—the structural components as well as the major liturgical furnishings—leads to one of the three essential ways of knowing God. So the building is a prefatory means of contemplation, which leads to the three major routes to the mystery of the Godhead Itself.<sup>142</sup>

The term θεωρία, or contemplation, occurs in the context of early Christian biblical commentaries and Byzantine liturgical commentaries.<sup>143</sup> In both

<sup>140</sup> G. Khouri-Sarkis, “Note sur les mètres poétiques syriaques,” *OrSyr*, 3 (1958), 63–72, esp. 64–66, 70; also J. Puyade, “Composition interne de l’Office syrien,” *ibid.*, 2 (1957), 77–92; 3 (1958), 25–62, esp. 44 note 12 (notes by Khouri-Sarkis).

<sup>141</sup> The term “architectural θεωρία” is used here analogously with the term “liturgical θεωρία” as used by Bornert, *Commentaires* (*supra*, note 11), 35–39, 90 ff. Bornert’s work, in turn, rests on the studies of H. de Lubac and J. Daniélou, as he indicates. Smith (*Dome*, 91) suggests a similar notion with his term “architectural mysticism,” applied both to Eusebius’ speech on the Church at Tyre and to the Edessa Hymn.

<sup>142</sup> Although the presentation is not systematic, these conceptions are presupposed. Similar understandings of θεωρία occur throughout the eastern Christian tradition from Origen to the sixth century and beyond, especially among the Cappadocians, Origenists, and Monophysites. Briefly on Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, and Pseudo-Dionysius, cf. L. Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers* (London, 1960), 355, 384, 410. On Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug and Jacob of Sarug, cf. R. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford, 1976), 37–44, 105–11, 139. On Maximus the Confessor, Bornert, *Commentaires*, 93 ff.

<sup>143</sup> For discussion of the Byzantine liturgical commentaries in relation to the Patristic literature, cf. Bornert, *op. cit.*, esp. 47–82.

cases it refers to contemplation of the sacred text or of the sacred actions at the highest level, the spiritual or anagogical level. Hence the synonym for θεωρία in the Byzantine liturgical commentary is μυσταγωγία.

The Edessa Hymn, as an architectural θεωρία, resembles the mystagogical commentaries on the liturgy in one respect but differs in another. Like the liturgical commentaries, the hymn derives from the tradition of θεωρία as it had developed throughout the Patristic period, especially since Origen, as a manner of biblical interpretation. Both the hymn and the commentaries take this tradition of contemplation from its Scriptural context and apply it to an object or action. The object or action is then understood to be a means of ascent to God. The fundamental difference between the architectural θεωρία of the hymn and the liturgical θεωρία of the commentaries is that the hymn contemplates an object—the church building—while the commentaries contemplate an action—the public worship of the Christian community. The two remain closely related since the place of the action (the building) and the instruments of the action (clergy, vestments, altar, ambo, vessels) are closely related to the actions themselves.

Liturgical θεωρία is rooted in Patristic typological and spiritual interpretations of the Jewish Temple cult and of the Jewish Scripture.<sup>144</sup> Early Christian writers, by claiming Jewish Scripture as their own, forced themselves to find Christian explanations not only for the events of Jewish history but also for the ceremonial of Jewish religion insofar as it was attested in Scripture. By the third century Origen had begun to apply the same method of spiritual interpretation of cultic actions directly to the Christian liturgy, so that what had begun as an apologetic necessity attained independent theological significance. For Origen, Scripture, the Church, and the Eucharist are all mysteries. That is, they are temporal or material phenomena in which the Divine Reality is present by participation.<sup>145</sup> These mysteries simultaneously reveal and conceal the Divine Reality.

Others followed Origen’s lead. Gregory of Nyssa, especially, began with the image of the Tabernacle

<sup>144</sup> The following discussion of liturgical θεωρία is based on the work of Bornert, *loc. cit.*

<sup>145</sup> More precisely, the temporal or material phenomena participate in varying degrees in God. Further, cf. D. L. Balas, “The idea of participation in the structure of Origen’s thought. Christian transposition of a theme of the Platonic tradition,” *Origeniana*, ed. H. Crouzel et al., *Quaderni di Vetera Christianorum*, 12 (Bari, 1975), 257–75.

and developed the Christological and ecclesiological dimensions of its *interpretatio christiana*. Gregory's interpretation of the Tabernacle provided the background for the Pseudo-Dionysian ecclesiastical and celestial hierarchies. Pseudo-Dionysius carried out the anagogical emphasis as it had become prominent in the Alexandrian line, especially in Origen himself and in the Origenists.<sup>146</sup> In these later Alexandrian writings the anagogical contemplation of liturgical actions, personages, and objects takes place without emphasis on the Tabernacle or other Jewish antecedents. In some cases the Old Testament antitype has completely disappeared and the Christian contemplation of heavenly reality proceeds directly from Christian liturgy.

As represented in the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Isidore of Pelusium, and Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Antiochene line of Scriptural interpretation followed a similar development, through the interpretation of Jewish Scripture and ceremonial, especially the Tabernacle, to the interpretation of Christian liturgy as the analogue of the angelic liturgy. But the Antiochenes also emphasized the interpretation of Christian liturgy as the reenactment of the life and death of Christ. Further, while clearly subordinating the Old Testament antitypes to their type, Christ, this line of interpretation is less likely to omit the Jewish antecedents entirely from the discussion. Both Alexandrian and Antiochene schools share Origen's fundamental notion of a mystery as something which simultaneously reveals and conceals spiritual reality, though the Antiochenes are more influenced by Aristotelian epistemology than are the more Platonic Alexandrians. The more obvious distinctions between the two approaches are the Antiochene interest in the liturgical mysteries as representative of the events, persons, and places associated with the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the greater Alexandrian inclination toward analogy which bypasses Jewish antecedents.<sup>147</sup>

Architectural θεωρία, such as we find in the Edessa Hymn, may be expected to follow the same general pattern of development as liturgical θεωρία—from the *interpretatio christiana* of a Jewish model to a Christian contemplation of either the

<sup>146</sup> Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea fall into this line to a limited extent; more fully, Evagrius of Pontus; cf. Bornert, *Commentaires*, 52, 64–66, 71.

<sup>147</sup> For the similarities and differences in general approach between the Alexandrians and the Antiochenes with respect to liturgical θεωρία, cf. *ibid.*, esp. 47, 52, 72–75, 82; for the ongoing significance of both approaches, 267 f.

Alexandrian or Antiochene type. That is, in its more developed phase the contemplation might proceed directly from Christian temporal reality (the church building) to heavenly reality (the preexistent Church), or it would clearly subordinate the Jewish antitype (the Tabernacle) to its type (the Church). If this analogy with the liturgical commentaries is sound—and it would seem to be—then the Edessa Hymn represents a relatively early stage in the development of architectural θεωρία, since the Jewish intermediary, the Tabernacle, is quite prominent in the first eleven strophes of the hymn. Further, the latter half of the hymn, with its emphasis on New Testament events, personages, and places, would seem to indicate an Antiochene provenience for the hymn.

If the Edessa Hymn represents a relatively early stage of architectural θεωρία, its literary roots should be traceable to the contemporaneous exegetical literature of Christian Edessa. In order to elucidate this literary background, we turn now to a brief history of the exegetical traditions at Edessa, followed by a discussion of the notion of the Tabernacle in each of those traditions.

## VII. Exegetical Traditions in Sixth-century Edessa

There were three major strands of exegetical tradition in Edessa by the early sixth century: (1) the Syriac traditions stemming from Ephrem of Nisibis; (2) the Antiochene tradition, especially as represented by the commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia; (3) the Alexandrian tradition, represented by Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius of Pontus, and perhaps some earlier writers.<sup>148</sup> The works of Ephrem had constituted the core of the theological and exegetical curriculum of the School of the Persians at Edessa from the late fourth to the early fifth century. In the early fifth century Ibas, director of the school and later Bishop of Edessa, had the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodore of Tarsus translated from Greek to Syriac for use in the School of the Persians.<sup>149</sup> These new translations were so successful that they virtually sup-

<sup>148</sup> Barhadbešabba Arbaya, *La cause de la Fondation des écoles*, ed. and trans. A. Scher, PO, 4 (1908), 382; also, A. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis* (hereafter, *Nisibis*), CSCO, 266 (Louvain, 1965), 14.

<sup>149</sup> Barhadbešabba, *op. cit.*, 382 f.; also, Vööbus, *Nisibis*, 14 ff.; Lebon, *op. cit.*, 39 ff.; E. R. Hayes, *L'École d'Edesse* (Paris, 1930), 154–55; A. Vööbus, *A History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, II, CSCO, 197 (Louvain, 1960), 410–14.

planted the indigenous tradition of Ephrem's exegesis.<sup>150</sup> In 489, however, after a series of struggles between Nestorians and Monophysites in Edessa, the School of Persians was closed.<sup>151</sup> Narsai, a Nestorian who had previously fled from Edessa to Nisibis, had become the director of the newly established School of Nisibis.<sup>152</sup> So the school at Nisibis fell heir to the Antiochene style of exegesis.<sup>153</sup>

These events put an end to substantial Nestorian leadership in Edessa.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, the Antiochene manner of exegesis, which had permeated the curriculum until 489, continued to exercise a profound influence on Christians in the area through the Monophysites who had studied at the School of Edessa. Foremost among them were Philoxenus of Mabbug and Jacob of Sarug. Both Philoxenus and Jacob attempted to expunge the effects of their Antiochene schooling.<sup>155</sup> Philoxenus, who may have been instrumental in the closing of the School of the Persians in 489, was especially determined in this regard.<sup>156</sup> While deliberately returning to the exegetical tradition of Ephrem, the Syrian Monophysites apparently looked to Alexandrian sources as well.<sup>157</sup> Even strongly Origenistic currents were

felt at Edessa by this time, thanks to the dissemination of the writings of Evagrius of Pontus and Stephen bar Sudaili.<sup>158</sup>

An appropriate context for studying the symbolic meaning of the Tabernacle in the Edessa Hymn is the following: (a) the literary corpus of Ephrem of Nisibis; (b) the works of Antiochene exegesis known to have been translated into Syriac before the mid-sixth century, especially the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia insofar as they survive; (c) works of the Alexandrian exegetical tradition which are known to have been translated into Syriac before the middle of the sixth century; (d) works of the Syriac writers of the later fifth and early sixth centuries, especially those associated with Edessa.

### a. Ephrem the Syrian

The most striking example of the interpretation of the Tabernacle in the works of Ephrem the Syrian is his cycle of *Hymns on Paradise*.<sup>159</sup> These employ an extensive system of symbols relative to the Tabernacle. In the third hymn the Tabernacle is the symbol of Paradise: the Tree of Life is the Holy of Holies; the Tree of Knowledge is the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle; eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is the pulling aside of the veil, an action which gives to Adam and Eve two kinds of knowledge: "the glory of the intimate Tabernacle" and the "misery" of seeing their bodily condition.<sup>160</sup> In the sixth hymn Ephrem sets forth the Church on earth as a type of Paradise.<sup>161</sup> In passing, he compares the original creation, Paradise before the Fall, with a house built by God.<sup>162</sup>

Implicit in the *Hymns on Paradise* is the comparison of the Tabernacle with the Church on earth and with the created order. Since the world is also like a house, all these conceptions could have been fused to conclude that the Christian church build-

<sup>150</sup> Vööbus, *Nisibis*, 24 ff.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–32.

<sup>152</sup> Further on Narsai, cf. *ibid.*, 57–121. For a general introduction to the life and work of Narsai, cf. P. Gignoux, *Homélies de Narsai* (*supra*, note 8), esp. 419–516.

<sup>153</sup> This is the line through which the Antiochene exegesis was transmitted to Cosmas Indicopleustes, cf. Wolska, *Topographie*, 63–85.

<sup>154</sup> Yet even in the early sixth century there were still some Nestorians in Edessa, such as Thomas of Edessa who is supposed to have helped Mar Aba translate the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia into Syriac, cf. Wolska, *Topographie*, 66.

<sup>155</sup> On Jacob's studies at Edessa and his later view that through the works of Diodore, Theodore, and Theodoret the School of the Persians had "corrupted the whole Orient," cf. P. Martin, "Lettres de Jacques de Saroug aux moines du Couvent de Mar Bassus, et à Paul d'Edesse," in ZDMG, 30 (1876), 220–22 (text), 224 f. (trans.); G. Olinder, *Jacobi Sarugensis Epistulae quotquot subsunt* (Paris, 1937; repr. Louvain, 1952), CSCO, 110, 58–61; discussed by Jansma, "Hexameron" (*supra*, note 36), 264 f., and by A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabboug, Sa vie, ses écrits et sa théologie* (Louvain, 1963), 30. For the importance of the School tradition for Jacob's homilies in Hexaemeron, cf. Jansma, *op. cit.*, 278.

<sup>156</sup> On Philoxenus' education and "conversion" at Edessa, cf. de Halleux, *op. cit.*, 22–30. For the anti-dioaphysite polemical intent of Philoxenus' scriptural work, cf. *ibid.*, 131 f., but for his continued dependence on what he had been taught, cf. *ibid.*, 30 note 52.

<sup>157</sup> Or perhaps the influence, at least in Philoxenus' case, ought to be more narrowly identified as Evagrian; on this, cf. de Halleux, *op. cit.*, 440 f. *et passim*, also A. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia et l'Origénisme*, 213, for the view that Philoxenus was the probable translator of the expurgated version of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* of Evagrius. I suspect a broader interest in Alexandrian tradition at this time as evidenced by the translation of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* of Gregory of Nyssa between 450 and 550, cf.

note 169 *infra*. This, rather than earlier as Jansma suggested ("Hexameron," 268 f.), is the time when unexpected traditions of exegesis enter into Jacob of Sarug's exegesis. A fuller examination of this question would be useful but cannot be undertaken here.

<sup>158</sup> Guillaumont, *Kephalaia et l'Origénisme*, esp. 196–337.

<sup>159</sup> Syriac text with German translation by E. Beck, *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Paradiso und Contra Julianum*, CSCO, 174–75 (Louvain, 1957). French translation, Éphrem de Nisibe, *Hymnes sur le Paradis*, trans. R. Lavenant, intro. and notes F. Graffin, SC, 137 (Paris, 1968). Partial English translation by S. Brock, *Harp of the Spirit*, Studies Supplementary to Sobornost 4 (London, 1975).

<sup>160</sup> Hymn 3, 5–7, *et passim*.

<sup>161</sup> Hymn 6, 7–12.

<sup>162</sup> Hymn 13, 2.

ing is symbolic of the cosmos and of the Tabernacle and of Paradise. So Ephrem provides a basis from which the ideas stated explicitly in the Edessa Hymn might have developed. But Ephrem never explicitly equated his images of Paradise with one another, nor did he apply them to a church building.

#### b. Antiochene Exegesis

The primary exponent of the second major exegetical strand present in Edessa, the Antiochene, is Theodore of Mopsuestia.<sup>163</sup> The Tabernacle played a major role in Theodore's theological and exegetical system. He conceived of the Tabernacle as the true type of the visible creation.<sup>164</sup> That is, just as God indwells the visible created order, He also dwelt in the Mosaic Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was given to the Jews to stress that their God, in contrast to the idols of the pagans, was the creator and sustainer of the entire cosmos. The Tabernacle, divided by the veil into an inner and an outer area, is the exact model of the cosmos, which is divided by the firmament into two καταστάσεις or conditions.<sup>165</sup> The distinction between the two καταστάσεις is at once temporal and spatial. The first κατάστασις, the lower world, was created even before the Fall to be the temporal dwelling place of human beings. The second κατάστασις, the upper world, is the dwelling place for angels at present, but it is also the eschatological home of humankind.

For Theodore, the furnishings of the Tabernacle are not types, but only symbols of lesser theological significance.<sup>166</sup> These furnishings are symbols of the seven days of the week, or of the four corners of the earth, but not of the members of the Church. Instead, Theodore's preferred ecclesiological metaphor is the Body of Christ.<sup>167</sup> So Theodore's understanding of the Tabernacle provides a parallel for the cosmological dimension of the symbolism of the Edessa Hymn but not its ecclesiological dimension. Theodore's interpretation of

<sup>163</sup> Fragments collected and studied by R. Devreesse, *Essai* (*supra*, 136); for discussion of the surviving corpus of Theodore in Syriac and Greek, cf. Vööbus, *Nisibis*, 19 f., and Gignoux, *Homélies de Narsai*.

<sup>164</sup> Devreesse, *Essai*, 25ff.

<sup>165</sup> On the two *catastases* in Theodore's thought, cf. Devreesse, *Essai*, 89 f., 100 f.; also Wolska, *Topographie*, 37 ff.; and Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie*, III, 406–10. Further, esp. on the difference between this and the Origenistic view, cf. Guillau-mont, *Kephalaia et l'Origénisme*, 184 f.

<sup>166</sup> On types vs. other symbols in Theodore's system, cf. Devreesse, *Essai*.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

the Tabernacle as a cosmological symbol implies comparison of the cosmos with a tent or building. But the absence of the ecclesiological metaphor for the Tabernacle means that Theodore also fails to apply the symbolism to a particular church building. This strand of exegetical tradition, like the works of Ephrem, provides some of the background of the Edessa Hymn, though not all of it.

#### c. Alexandrian Exegesis

The symbolic interpretation of the Tabernacle has a long and fairly complex history in the Alexandrian school of exegesis from Philo through Origen to Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>168</sup> With one exception these works either were not translated into Syriac, or the translations have not survived or have yet to be discovered. The sole exception is Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, which was translated in the late fifth or early sixth century by an unknown Syrian Monophysite.<sup>169</sup> Although it is possible that another of the surviving interpretations of the Tabernacle was known in Syriac, Gregory's commentary is the most probable point of contact between this aspect of Alexandrian exegesis and Edessene Christianity of the early sixth century.<sup>170</sup>

In his *Life of Moses*, which does not exist in a Syriac translation, Gregory laid out a complex but fairly clear interpretation of the Tabernacle and its furnishings, based on Exodus 25–26 and Hebrews 8–9.<sup>171</sup> Gregory was aware of the cosmological in-

<sup>168</sup> Philo, *De Vita Mosis* 2.15.71 – 27.140 and *Quaest. Ex.* 2.51–106; Epistle of Barnabas 16; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.6.32–40; Origen, *In Ex. hom.* 9 and *Comm. Cant.* 2.1; Ps. Justin, *Coh. ad Graecos* (MG 6.296 B–C); Gregory Nazianzen *Or.* 28.31 (MG 36.72 A); Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mos.* 2.170–188 and *Comm. Cant.* *Or.* 2 *passim* and *Or.* 14, esp. H. Langerbeck, ed., *Gregorii Nysseni in Canticum Canticorum*, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, ed. W. Jaeger, VI (Leiden, 1960), 415: 14 ff. Strictly speaking, the Epistle of Barnabas and the oration of Gregory of Nazianzen and the Pseudo-Justinian work may not be "Alexandrian," but the point has little relevance to the discussion here.

<sup>169</sup> C. Van den Eynde, *La version syriaque du commentaire de Grégoire de Nysse sur le Cantique des Cantiques: Ses origines, Ses témoins, Son influence*, Bibliothèque du Muséon, 10 (Louvain, 1939), esp. 21 f., 37–42, 61–66; and see Langerbeck, *op. cit.*, lxi–lxvii. Also R. H. Connolly, in *JThS*, 41 (1940), 84–86.

<sup>170</sup> Seventeen of Gregory of Nazianzen's orations survive in Syriac, but have not been edited; possibly the twenty-eighth is among them. For the MS, see I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syria-ca* (Rome, 1965), 234, or A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (hereafter, *Geschichte*) (Bonn, 1922), 77 f.

<sup>171</sup> *Gregorii Nysseni de Vita Moysis*, ed. H. Musurillo, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, ed. W. Jaeger, H. Langerbeck, VII, pt. I (Leiden, 1964); *La Vie de Moïse*, ed. and trans. J. Daniélou, SC, 1 bis (Paris, 1955); Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans., intro., and notes by A. J. Malherbe and E. Ferguson, *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York, 1978).

terpretation of the Tabernacle as passed on by Philo and Origen.<sup>172</sup> The elaboration of Christological and ecclesiological dimensions for the symbol had been begun by Origen and Methodius of Olympus as well.<sup>173</sup> Gregory incorporated their notions and further refined the Christological interpretation. For Gregory, Christ as the preexistent power and wisdom of God, the Logos, is the heavenly Tabernacle; the Logos incarnate is the earthly Tabernacle.<sup>174</sup> The furnishings of the heavenly Tabernacle represent the angels.<sup>175</sup> The furnishings of the earthly Tabernacle are the members of the Church in their various liturgical roles and in their ascetic and spiritual lives.<sup>176</sup> Philo had already said that the “divine powers” were housed in the heavenly Tabernacle.<sup>177</sup> Drawing on the Pauline image of the Church members as members of the Body of Christ, Origen had added to this the parallel notion that the Church members are represented by the furnishings of the earthly Tabernacle.<sup>178</sup> Gregory combined the two notions in a manner which anticipates the Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchies.<sup>179</sup> These same ideas, though less fully and systematically presented, may be found in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.<sup>180</sup>

<sup>172</sup> For a discussion of Gregory’s sources and especially his relation to Philo and Origen on the Tabernacle, cf. Malherbe and Ferguson, *op. cit.*, 179 ff.

<sup>173</sup> The Bride in the Song of Songs represents for Origen three realities: the Church of the circumcision, the Church of the Gentiles and the individual soul (Comm. Cant. 2.3). With less than total consistency, Origen says that the Bride of the Canticle represents the wife of Moses, while Moses represents the spiritual Law and hence Christ as Logos (Comm. Cant. 2.1). Origen makes occasional references to the Tabernacle (esp. in Comm. Cant. 2.1). The Incarnation is the house that Wisdom/Sophia built for herself (Comm. Cant. 2.1), with the bishops, priests, and deacons represented in it. Again, she is the churches throughout the world. In Comm. Cant. 2.8 the Bride is the preexistent Church, beloved of the preexistent Christ. On the preexistent Church in Origen’s predecessors, cf. J. Beumer, “Die alchristliche Idee einer präexistierenden Kirche und ihre theologische Anwendung,” *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 9 (1942), 13–22; in Origen, A. Lieske, *Die Theologie der Logosmystik bei Origenes* (Münster i.W., 1938), 88 ff.; J. C. Plunpe, *Mater Ecclesia. An Enquiry into the Concept of the Church as Mother in Early Christianity* (Washington, D.C., 1943), chap. 5; C. Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ. An Enquiry into the Nuptial Element in Early Christianity* (London, 1940), 172 ff. Discussion of these and other sources in R. P. Lawson, trans., Origen, *The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies*, Ancient Christian Writers, 26 (New York, 1956), 14, 98, 106, 149, 311, 338, 349 *et passim*. For Methodius on the Tabernacle and Church, cf. Sym. 5.7.

<sup>174</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, Vit. Mos. 2.174.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.179.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.184.

<sup>177</sup> Quaest. Ex. 2.62; Malherbe and Ferguson, *op. cit.*, 180 note 230.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. note 173 *supra*.

<sup>179</sup> Daniélou, *op. cit.*, (*supra*, note 171), 89 note 2; Malherbe and Ferguson, *op. cit.*, 181 note 240.

<sup>180</sup> The Incarnation is the construction of the true Tabernacle (Greg. In Cant. 5,9; Langerbeck, 381: 1ff.). The apostles,

The particular contribution of the Alexandrians, especially Gregory of Nyssa, to the interpretation of the Tabernacle is the development of its Christological and ecclesiological aspects. The Christological dimension is not present in the Edessa Hymn, but the ecclesiological interpretation of the Tabernacle is one of its principal themes.

#### d. Syriac Writers of the Later Fifth and Early Sixth Centuries: Narsai and Jacob of Sarug

Since the Antiochene exegesis was taught at Edessa during the time of Narsai’s studies there, and since Narsai, a Nestorian, remained faithful to his Antiochene heritage, it is not surprising to find the influence of Theodore of Mopsuestia in Narsai’s *Homilies on the Creation*.<sup>181</sup> In his exegesis of the Genesis account of creation Narsai describes the visible world as a huge building. In addition to this building, which is described as the “lower building” and “suitable for mortals,” there is also an upper building for the “spiritual beings.” This bipartite creation is a clear reflection of the two καταστάσεις of the cosmological system of Theodore of Mopsuestia.<sup>182</sup> The following is Narsai’s description of the cosmos:

The Creator constructed a great building for humankind,  
And He placed its foundations on liquid water  
which He made solid.  
He stretched out over it a roof of liquid water,  
And above it He piled up the water as in a reservoir.  
He suspended lamps from the ceiling of His building: the sun and moon;  
And He poured out oil, the sign of His power,  
and lit them.  
Glorious is the Creator, sublime His creation,  
immense His foreknowledge,

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prophets, teachers, and pastors make up the Body of Christ (Greg. In Cant. 5,9; Langerbeck, 382:14 ff., drawing on Eph. 4:11 ff.). Together, these two notions mean that the Tabernacle, which is the Body of Christ, consists of the members of the Church. Elsewhere, Gregory says that the life of the virtuous person is represented by the furnishings of the Tabernacle (Greg. In Cant. 1,4; Langerbeck, 44:9 ff.). A full exposition of this imagery in Gregory’s commentary would be useful here, but is beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>181</sup> Gignoux, *Homélies de Narsai*. Unlike Gignoux, Jansma is convinced that Ephrem as well as Theodore had a significant impact on Narsai; cf. Jansma, “Etudes sur la pensée de Narsai. L’homélie n° XXXIV: essai d’interprétation,” *OrSyr*, 11 (1966), 147–68, 265–90, 393–429; further, “Narsai and Ephraem: Some Observations on Narsai’s Homilies on Creation and Ephraem’s Hymns on Faith,” *Parole de l’Orient*, 1 (1970), 49–68. The main point at issue, the motif of the “docta ignorantia,” does not bear directly on my subject here.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Gignoux, *Homélies de Narsai*, 444.

Who knew in advance, before it had been created, what His creation needed.  
 The One Who established all things made two buildings for the creation;  
 He created two dwellings and constructed two worlds.  
 He rendered the lower one suitable for mortals; He gathered it up and filled it with fruits appropriate to corporeal beings.  
 He made of the upper one a beautiful building full of delights,  
 So that the spiritual beings might enjoy it spiritually.  
 For the terrestrial beings, He made terrestrial things;  
 For the celestials, He promised celestial benefits.  
 The Omniscient contemplated the two buildings,  
 And He saw them before heaven and earth existed,  
 Because the will of His love was prior to His creation,  
 And the works that He did were outlined by His will for Him.  
 He built and constructed heaven and earth like a vast building;  
 He accumulated and heaped up immense wealth for the one who would live there.<sup>183</sup>

In the homilies on creation, Narsai, a Nestorian, clearly reflects the *κόσμος-οίκος* notion typical of Antiochene exegesis.<sup>184</sup> His description of the creation of the world is rooted in his notion of the Tabernacle, since Moses' vision of the Tabernacle (Genesis 24:12 ff., esp. 25:30) with the accompanying instructions constitute the basis for Moses' account of the creation of the world (i.e., Genesis 1 ff.).<sup>185</sup> The revelation of the Tabernacle is at once a revelation of the mysteries of the cosmos and of God's nature as Creator; God's nature can be known by mortal creatures only indirectly, through His creation.<sup>186</sup> The human being, made in the image of God, is the sole vehicle of the revelation of God's hidden nature. This is not because people share in God's nature itself, but because the production of Eve from Adam's side is a type of the generation of the Son from the Father and because Adam is made the lord of creation.<sup>187</sup> In the Incarnation,

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, I:83–104; for other examples cf. 444 note 64.

<sup>184</sup> Wolska, *Topographie*, 113–18, 121–27; and Cosmas Indopleustes, *Topographie*, ed. Wolska-Conus, IV.2 note 1.

<sup>185</sup> Gignoux, *Homélies de Narsai*, III, 1–30.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 87–100.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 135–44, 295 f.; III, 245 ff., 281–99, cf. discussion of Gignoux, 449–53; at times it seems Adam alone is in the image of God.

Christ restores and fulfills the promises of this image.<sup>188</sup>

In sum, for Narsai, the cosmos is a great two-storey building, which reveals God as Creator. God's inner Trinitarian nature cannot be known through the cosmos but only through human beings and especially through Christ. The cosmos is in the image of the Tabernacle, but Narsai equates neither Tabernacle nor cosmos with the Christian Church, whether as ecclesiological concept or as architectural actuality.

The surviving literary corpus of Jacob of Sarug provides an extensive exploitation of the Tabernacle imagery, which includes both cosmological and ecclesiological dimensions. In this, he, being a Syrian Monophysite, shows the influence of both the Antiochene and Alexandrian exegetes.

In his *Homilies in Hexaemeron*, Jacob portrays the cosmos as a building, as expected of one schooled in Antiochene exegesis.<sup>189</sup> Jacob's two-storey cosmos has a firmament which divides the waters above from those below, sheltering the material creation, the dwelling-place of humankind:

The firmament came to exist in the middle of the waters on the second day,  
 As the Lord commanded it by a gesture of His creativity,  
 And it became a limit between the waters for the waters above.  
 And it became a shelter [*m̄lalthā*] for this dry place beneath.  
 And it became a tent [*maškna* = Tabernacle] for the bounded depth of the whole world,  
 And in its shadow [*tlālā*] dwells and rests the entire Creation.  
 It became the ceiling [*taṭlīlā*] for the great house of humankind,  
 That the gesture of the Deity built from nothing.  
 It became like a vault [*kaphthā*] that hangs and stands without foundation,  
 And not columns but a gesture supports it.<sup>190</sup>

This same firmament that forms the ceiling of the human habitation, is the floor of the upper world. "Stretched out like a garment under the habitations of the Deity,"<sup>191</sup> it separates the corporeal world from the incorporeal. The firmament is solid and

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 299, and Gignoux in the introduction, 449 f.

<sup>189</sup> Jansma, "Hexameron," 4–43, 129–62, 253–85 (contains partial translation of Jacob's text). For the Syriac text, cf. P. Bedjan, ed., *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis* (Paris-Leipzig, 1905–1910), III, 1–151

<sup>190</sup> Bedjan, *op. cit.*, III, 34:12–35:2.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 38:3.

material, but all that is above it is nonmaterial, an unlimited “sea of light,” the present dwelling place of angels and future home of human beings.

All this is compatible with the Antiochene exegesis and proceeds from Jacob’s early exegetical training at Edessa. But equally as well established as the *κόσμος-δίκος* notion for the Antiochenes was the explicit rejection of a spherical firmament. Both Diodore of Tarsus and Severian of Gabala oppose the biblical terms *καμάρα* and *σκηνή* to the pagan term *σφαῖρα*, eschewing the use of the latter term.<sup>192</sup> Jacob of Sarug—whether in blissful ignorance of this issue or deliberately returning to the compromise of Basil of Caesarea—juxtaposes the traditional Antiochene language (tent, ceiling, shelter, vault) with “sphere,” thus suggesting a compromise with the Ptolemaic cosmology:

All of the creation of bodies and shades  
Like a sphere [= Gk. *σφαῖρα*] is placed, all of it,  
in the midst of nothing.  
There is no body above or below it  
Or surrounding it except the power that sup-  
ports it.  
It is suspended and stands like a flying creature  
in the midst of nothing.<sup>193</sup>

In the middle of the sphere is a disc upon which the material creation rests. The angelic powers dwell in a “wilderness of light” which is above the disc and also seems to be above the firmament which encloses the material world from above:<sup>194</sup>

There is in the middle the troubled world [*‘almā*]  
full of motions,  
And above this disc [*gîglâ*; also = sphere] bear-  
ing bodies,  
A wilderness of light in which dwell the powers.  
Beneath these [is] this firmament like a sphere  
[*sphayrâ*]  
In which are closed up these corporeal bodies.  
[The firmament is] pitched like a tent for the  
habitation of races and tribes.  
There dwell in it many peoples with their natu-  
ral dispositions  
And the Wisdom of the Exalted One made it firm  
and it came to exist on the second day,  
Like a ceiling [*taqlîthâ*] for the whole world [*‘almâ*]  
of people.<sup>195</sup>

<sup>192</sup> Wolska, *Topographie*, 131; cf. also 129–32, 170 f.

<sup>193</sup> Bedjan, *op. cit.*, III, 40:10–14.

<sup>194</sup> Since the angelic “powers” are not corporeal, they may be above the sphere of the firmament without contradicting Jacob’s previous statement that “there is no body above or below it.”

<sup>195</sup> Bedjan, *op. cit.*, III, 40:15–41:4.

Jacob’s treatment of the cosmos shows a unique combination of influences from Antioch and Alexandria—the *κόσμος-οίκος* idea of Antioch coupled with the acceptance of a spherical cosmology typical of Alexandria.

In addition to the cosmological notions related to the Tabernacle, Jacob reflects an ecclesiological interpretation of the Tabernacle. The latter shows again the probable influence of Alexandrian thought on Jacob. The vision of Moses on Mt. Sinai, which prepared him for the construction of the Tabernacle, was, in Jacob’s interpretation, a vision of the preexistent Church:

Through Moses the Church was imprinted by a  
mystery,  
And the Tabernacle was designated as the type  
(of the Church).  
He who was not truly her Lord [i.e., Moses] did  
not create her.  
He stamped her imprint mysteriously and left  
and passed away.  
For the elect Church was built from eternity,  
And Moses testifies that he saw her image on  
Mount Sinai.<sup>196</sup>

Jacob’s primary concern is to identify the vision of Moses as the preexistent Church and thereby to emphasize the subordinate status of Moses and the Old Covenant to Christ and the New Covenant. But it is equally clear that the vision provided the precise model by which the Tabernacle was constructed by Bezalel:

Unless Moses saw with his eyes the Church that  
was built,  
He would not have been able to make all of its  
ornament.  
For with the image that was seen by him on Mount  
Sinai  
He came down and completed the construction  
without confusion.<sup>197</sup>

Thus the content of Moses’ vision is at once the heavenly archetype of which the Tabernacle constructed by Bezalel is a mere earthly copy, and it is the preexistent Church. Like Gregory of Nyssa, Jacob holds that the object of Moses’ vision has a

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 40:7–11; the citation is from Jacob’s homily entitled, “On the consecration of the Church and on Moses the prophet”; for the Syriac text, cf. *ibid.*, I, 38–48. In this homily Moses is presented as a type of Christ, not primarily as lawgiver or as leader of the people from bondage in Egypt, but as the prophet who saw the eternal preexistent Church of the elect.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 41:9–22.

higher degree of reality than its earthly imprint, the Mosaic Tabernacle. But whereas Gregory identifies this heavenly reality with the Logos, the preexistent Christ, Jacob identifies it with the preexistent Church.

Jacob's account of Moses' vision of the Tabernacle takes the form of a fiery female figure whose womb is the dwelling place of the several ranks of heavenly beings. She awaits the arrival of the "corporeal beings," the members of the Church. Rather than identifying her with the cosmos, Jacob says that the created order is "made a footstool for her feet, and she like a noblewoman bore herself grandly in the height. (Moses) saw her seated above the limits of all the high places, and her Lord alone rules over her."<sup>198</sup>

Like Gregory of Nyssa, Jacob sees the Tabernacle as a personification and as the dwelling place of all the angels, but whereas in Gregory's *Life of Moses* the Tabernacle represents the Logos, for Jacob it is the preexistent Church, Bride of the Logos. The image of the Church as Bride is common in the Alexandrian Christian tradition of commentaries on the Song of Songs, represented by Origen as well as by Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>199</sup> Gregory's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* or the general influx of Origenistic teachings could be the source of Jacob's imagery.<sup>200</sup> The source here cannot be Antiochene since Theodore of Mopsuestia explicitly rejected the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs.<sup>201</sup> It is conceivable, though not likely, that Jacob was inspired by rabbinic speculations on the Shekinah as the feminine counterpart of Yahweh; these notions might have reached Jacob either directly from Jewish contacts or through earlier Syriac Christian sources which do not survive.<sup>202</sup>

Whatever his precise sources, Jacob of Sarug

represents a point of convergence of cosmological and ecclesiological traditions related to the Tabernacle. Jacob's *Hexaemeron* reflects the typical Antiochene interest in the Tabernacle as cosmological symbol and the accompanying notion of the κόσμος-οῖκος, represented in the Syriac realm also by Nar-sai of Nisibis; but by his use of the term "sphere" for the firmament, Jacob also shows an Alexandrian modification of that cosmology. Finally, Jacob is influenced by the ecclesiological and mystical speculations on the Tabernacle and on the Song of Songs, probably mediated by the earlier Alexandrian Christian exegetes.

#### e. Conclusions

The examination of a variety of traditions about the Tabernacle in the main lines of Christian exegetical tradition at sixth-century Edessa has led to their convergence in the homilies of Jacob of Sarug. Jacob broadly exploits the imagery which had developed in both the Antiochene and Alexandrian exegetical schools. From the former he drew an emphasis on the Tabernacle as a cosmic house; from the latter, the vision of the Tabernacle as the (female) personification of the preexistent Church. Jacob was in an almost unique position among Patristic exegetes. As an early Syrian Monophysite, he had been trained in the Antiochene exegesis, yet his disaffection with the Antiochene Christology turned him toward the older Syriac sources and to Alexandrian traditions. So his exegesis was a hybrid, sometimes holding in tension essentially incompatible concepts.

#### VIII. Conclusion: From Scriptural Θεωρία to Architectural Θεωρία

The complex exegetical heritage of Jacob of Sarug has direct bearing on the problem of the interpretation of the domed church building as microcosm. By the sixth century C.E. only the Antiochene school maintained and emphasized the tradition of the cosmos as building. The Antiochene exegetical tradition was also explicitly opposed to the notion of the cosmos as a sphere. The notion of the spherical cosmos and the related idea that the firmament is a hemisphere (or that they are sets of spheres or hemispheres) were the preferred views in the Alexandrian tradition of exegesis. Yet the cosmic building and the hemispherical dome together constitute the basis for the interpretation of domed church buildings in cosmological terms and

<sup>198</sup>Ibid., I, 42:22–43:3.

<sup>199</sup>Cf. note 26 *supra*.

<sup>200</sup>On the spread of Origenism in the Syriac-speaking environment, cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia et l'Origénisme*, 173 ff. The preexistent Church as the Bride of Christ is a prominent theme in Jacob's writings. For other examples, cf. F. Graffin, "Recherches sur le thème de l'Église-Épouse dans les liturgies et la littérature patristique de langue syriaque," *OrSyr*, 3 (1958), 317–36, esp. 322–36; also, J. Babakhan, "Essai de Vulgarisation des Homélies Métriques de Jacques de Saroug, Évêque de Batnan en Mésopotamie (451–521)," *ROChr*, 17 (1912), 410–26; 18(1913), 42–52, 360–74; idem, "Homélie de Jacques de Saroug sur le Voile de Moïse," *Vie spirituelle ascétique et mystique*, 91 (1954), 142–56; and M. Albert, *Jacques de Saroug: Homélies contre les juifs*, PO, 38, (1976), 19 *et passim*.

<sup>201</sup>Devreesse, *Essai* (*supra*, note 136).

<sup>202</sup>M. Pope, *The Songs of Songs* (*supra*, note 16), 158 ff. *et passim*, on the Shekinah. On this and on the question of direct Jewish influence, cf. notes 14, 15 *supra*.

their domes (as distinct from vaults, canopies, or other curved but not spherical surfaces) as representations of the heavens. Smith tried to reconcile the Antiochene cosmology with Syrian architecture by proposing that the Antiochene firmament—the “lower heaven”—was tentlike, while the upper heaven was spherical. The lower heaven would then be represented by the vaulted ceiling while the upper heaven was represented by the dome. This corresponds well with the Edessa Hymn, as he noted. But as Wolska has shown, Smith’s conception cannot be rooted in the Antiochene hexaemera with their explicit rejection of the term σφαῖρα.<sup>203</sup> The transposition of scriptural θεωρία to architectural θεωρία seems inadequate as an explanation of the cosmological interpretation of the domed church building, if Greek Christian traditions alone are taken into account.

Our consideration of certain homilies of Jacob of Sarug shows that this Syrian Monophysite exegete mixed the two major Greek traditions to produce a scriptural θεωρία which happened to be suitable for transposition into the architectural θεωρία of the Edessa Hymn. The discrepancy in theological perspective between Jacob of Sarug and Bishop Amazon, who rebuilt the church at Edessa, might seem to be a barrier to the interpretation proposed here, viz., that the homilies of Jacob of Sarug provide the immediate background of the Edessa Hymn. But this apparent difficulty is not actual. A hymnographer writing a dedication hymn for the Chalcedonian bishop of Edessa might draw upon the scriptural interpretation of a Syrian Monophysite like Jacob of Sarug for three reasons: (1) Syriac literary models of some kind were necessary.<sup>204</sup> (2) Provided that Christological issues were not directly addressed, this could be a subtle means of reconciling the substantial Monophysite populace of Edessa to the Chalcedonian bishop. (3) Jacob’s hybrid exegetical tradition could be taken to represent a compromise similar to the views espoused by the Greek neo-Chalcedonians of the later sixth century, such as Leontius of Byzantium.<sup>205</sup>

The Edessa Hymn appears to be the earliest sur-

<sup>203</sup> Smith, *Dome*, 88 f.; Wolska, *Topographie*, 129–31, esp. 131.

<sup>204</sup> For a Syriac example which might have provided the formal but not the thematic model for the Edessa Hymn, cf. Appendix 3.

<sup>205</sup> Jacob’s theological stance was sufficiently ambiguous to produce a lengthy scholarly discussion. For the basic literature, cf. Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 107 f; to this may be added: T. Jansma, “Encore le credo de Jacques de Saroug,” *OrSyr*, 10 (1965), 75–88; 193–236; 331–70; 475–510; and the general assessment of Jacob’s Christology in R. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies* (*supra*, note 142).

viving example of architectural θεωρία in Syriac, but it has a notable precedent in Greek Christian literature, Eusebius’ speech on the Church at Tyre.<sup>206</sup> Eusebius’ speech shows that the notion of the cosmic house or temple had been applied to a Christian basilica by the end of the fourth century.<sup>207</sup> The Edessa Hymn’s application of this notion to a domed church building rather than a basilica represents a variation on the theme of the cosmic temple. At first glance the hymn appears to be only a minor modification of the theme, due to a shift in architectural style. But behind this change stands a lengthy and controversial process of integrating features of a new cosmology into the interpretation of Scripture and into an overall theological perspective. This process was being executed by the numerous hexaemera composed from the late fourth to the sixth century.

Jacob of Sarug’s hybrid solution to the cosmological problem was especially appropriate to the interpretation of the domed church building. The Edessa Hymn, emerging from the same geographical environment about a quarter of a century after Jacob’s death, presupposes Jacob’s cosmology. The Edessa Hymn constitutes the transposition of this scriptural θεωρία into an architectural θεωρία and pinpoints this transition at Edessa in the mid-sixth century. From there the diffusion of the architectural θεωρία could take place without further specific reference to the scriptural interpretations of the Tabernacle and of the opening chapters of Genesis which had given it birth.

#### Appendix 1. André Grabar’s Study of the Symbolism of the Edessa Hymn

André Grabar’s study of the Edessa Hymn in 1947 brought this relatively unknown piece of Syriac literature into the limelight of Byzantine architectural his-

<sup>206</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* X.IV, esp. 2–9, 63–68, 69–72. Although the earliest Syriac MS, dated to 462 C.E., does not contain the tenth book, it probably was known in Syriac by the mid-sixth century. For the Syriac text, cf. P. Bedjan, *Histoire ecclésiastique d’Eusèbe de Césarée. Version syriaque éditée pour la première fois* (Leipzig, 1877); and W. Wright and N. McLean, *The ecclesiastical history of Eusebius in Syriac*, edited from the ms with collation of the ancient Armenian version (Cambridge, 1898); trans. E. Nestle, TU, 25; on the age of the individual chapters, E. Nestle, *Syrische Grammatik*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1888), 44; E. Nestle, in ZDMG, 56, 559–64; E. Lohmann, *Der textkritische Wert der syrischen Übersetzung der Kirchengeschichte des Eusebius* (diss. Halle, 1899); W. Wright, *Journal of Semitic Languages*, 9, 117–36; 10, 150–64.

<sup>207</sup> Smith argues that the Church at Tyre must have been a domed structure, cf. *Dome*, 92. A recent study points out the literary context of Eusebius’ description, cf. J. Wilkinson, “Paulinus’ Temple at Tyre,” *JÖB*, 32 (1982), 553–61.

tory.<sup>208</sup> In that study Grabar argued that the hymn had a bipartite provenience.<sup>209</sup> On the one hand, the verses pertaining to the furnishings of the church building and to liturgical functions were interpreted in terms of biblical prototypes in the manner of the Byzantine liturgical commentaries attributed to Cyril or Sophronius of Jerusalem and Germanus of Constantinople.<sup>210</sup> On the other hand, the verses pertaining to the architecture itself, and especially to the dome, were interpreted in the manner of the Pseudo-Dionysian writings. Traditional biblical interpretations from Palestine were retained for the liturgical commentary, but the newer mystical trends of Greek Neo-Platonism were used for interpreting the new domed architecture.

Grabar questioned neither that Syriac was the original language of the hymn, nor that its place of origin was Edessa, nor that it was composed in honor of the Justinianic reconstruction of the church building, completed in the mid-sixth century.<sup>211</sup> Nevertheless, he argued that the cosmic and mystical symbolism of the hymn was "Greek" rather than "Syriac," because its literary roots were to be found in three Greek Christian works of the sixth and seventh centuries: (1) the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, (2) the *Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes, and (3) the *Mystagogy* of Maximus the Confessor.<sup>212</sup> Dependence on Maximus the Confessor (d. 662) necessitates a seventh-century date for the hymn, although one would otherwise assume that a hymn composed in honor of a building was intended to be used on the occasion of its dedication and hence contemporaneous with the completion of construction.<sup>213</sup> Grabar's analysis of the literary roots of the Edessa Hymn's symbolism and, consequently, his dating of the hymn have been generally accepted.<sup>214</sup>

The present study of the literary roots of the hymn leads to substantial modification of Grabar's analysis. Grabar correctly recognized that the Byzantine liturgical commentaries and the Pseudo-Dionysian writings are fundamentally similar to the Edessa Hymn. Subsequent research on the history of exegesis and the history of the liturgy, especially the work of Bornert on the Patristic exegetical background of the Byzantine liturgical commentaries, indicates a close relationship among scriptural, liturgical, and mystical commentaries.<sup>215</sup> A strict dichotomy between biblical and Neo-Platonic interpre-

<sup>208</sup> Grabar, "Le témoignage" (*supra*, note 3), 41–67.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. 59–63.

<sup>210</sup> For a recent discussion of the authorship and date of these works and further bibliography, cf. Bornert, *Commentaires* (*supra*, note 11), 125 ff., esp. 128 note 4.

<sup>211</sup> Grabar, "Le témoignage," 54, 52.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 54, 57–79.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, 52, 58, for Grabar's dating of the hymn. For the argument that the hymn is a foundation hymn, cf. Cameron, "Shroud" (*supra*, note 4), 10.

<sup>214</sup> For example, Wolska, *Topographie*, 295 f. Smith, *Dome*, 89–91. C. Mango and J. Parker, "A Twelfth-century Description of St. Sophia," *DOP*, 14 (1960), 241. Cameron, ed., Corippus, *In laudem Justini*, 207.

<sup>215</sup> Bornert, *Commentaires*, esp. 35 f.

tations is misleading in this context. Middle and Neo-Platonic philosophy strongly influenced early Christian biblical interpretation, especially in the Alexandrian tradition. The Pseudo-Dionysian writings and the *Mystagogy* of Maximus the Confessor are themselves examples of scriptural and liturgical θεωρία.<sup>216</sup>

It is now clear that Grabar's suggestions about the lines of literary influence leading to the Edessa Hymn are erroneous. First, since it has become clear that both Pseudo-Dionysius and the Edessa Hymn belong to a broader context in which mystical and cosmological interest are not uncommon, these affinities are not sufficient to show the literary dependence of the Edessa Hymn on Pseudo-Dionysius. Not even the nine orders of angels is exclusively Dionysian.<sup>217</sup> Second, the *Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes belongs in the context of early Christian exegetical literature. It is the product of the same Antiochene exegetical tradition that survives in the commentaries and homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Narsai of Nisibis, and in part, in the homilies of Jacob of Sarug. Cosmas transmitted the Syriac version of Antiochene hexaemeral literature back into the Greek-speaking world.<sup>218</sup> He is not the source but another branch of the tradition reflected in the Edessa Hymn. Third, Maximus the Confessor's *Mystagogy* shares the hymn's mystical and ecclesiological themes, but emphasis on the actual church building is less explicit in Maximus than in the hymn. The homilies of Jacob of Sarug provide a sufficient literary background for the hymn in Syriac rather than Greek and at a date more compatible with the external evidence. If there is any literary dependence between Maximus and the Edessa Hymn, it is more probable that Maximus is the recipient.

## Appendix 2. The Genre of the *Sôgîthâ*

The term *sôgîthâ* is used to identify four distinct types of Syriac hymn. According to Baumstark, the *sôgîthâ* is most characteristically a dialogue: it may be a dramatization either of biblical events or of a theological debate.<sup>219</sup> Some *sôgyâthâ* dramatizing biblical events, all of them attributed to Narsai, consist of conversations between Cain and Abel, the Archangel Gabriel and Mary, Mary and the Magi, John the Baptist and Herod, the Pharisees and Jesus.<sup>220</sup> Another group of three *sôgyâthâ*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 66–72, on Pseudo-Dionysius as sacramental θεωρία; 90–104, on Maximus' *Mystagogy* as liturgical θεωρία.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. comments on strophe 19, *supra*.

<sup>218</sup> On Cosmas and the Antiochene exegesis, cf. Wolska, *Topographie*, esp. 31 note 1, 32, 37–85.

<sup>219</sup> Or a combination of the two, cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte* (*supra*, note 170), 39 f. and note 5; also cf. R. Duval, *Anciennes Littératures Chrétiennes II*, *La Littérature Syriaque*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1900), 23 f.; and E. Wellesz, "Early Christian Music" and "Music of the Eastern Churches" in *Early Medieval Music up to 1300*, ed. Dom A. Hughes, *The New Oxford History of Music*, II (London, 1954), 1–57, esp. 9.

<sup>220</sup> F. Feldmann, *Syrische Wechselliieder von Narses* (Leipzig, 1896), Syriac text with German translation.

includes discussions among Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and God.<sup>221</sup> Examples of the second type of dramatic dialogue, the theological debate, are encounters between the Church and the Synagogue,<sup>222</sup> between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius,<sup>223</sup> or between a persecuting king and a group of martyrs.<sup>224</sup> Several of the biblical subjects chosen by the authors of *sôgyâthâ* have an element of conflict as well.<sup>225</sup>

Whether their purpose was the simple edification or the theological instruction of the listeners, the dialogue form seems to be an essential feature of these hymns. They were probably sung by a combination of two soloists and two choirs.<sup>226</sup> Robert Murray and Sebastian Brock have suggested that this controversial type of *sôgîthâ* stands in a direct line from the Mesopotamian contest poem to the western medieval tenson.<sup>227</sup> The alphabetical acrostic is a second device which is not always present in these hymns.

There is a third group of *sôgyâthâ*, which Baumstark classified as akin to ballads, and which may be the forerunners of the dialogical types of *sôgîthâ*.<sup>228</sup> Baumstark suggested that the essential feature of these hymns is their dramatic quality. They generally consist of a monologue put into the mouth of a single biblical character. One extant example comments on the story of the Prodigal Son.<sup>229</sup>

G. Khouri-Sarkis identified a fourth type of *sôgîthâ*, the Maronite type, which occurs frequently in the daily office of the Maronite rite. This type is closely related both by content and by meter to the *bâ'ûthâ*, a hymn of supplication, in the meter of Jacob of Sarug. It is often in the form of an alphabetical acrostic. The Edessa Hymn is essentially of this type, although its metrical pattern differs slightly: it has twenty-two strophes, each with four eight-syllable hemistichs rather than the usual twenty-two strophes, each with four four-syllable hemistichs.<sup>230</sup>

Although some *sôgyâthâ* are attributed in the manu-

<sup>221</sup> B. Kirschner, "Alphabetische Akrosticha in der syrischen Kirchenpoesie," *OrChr*, 6 (1906), 1–69; 7 (1907), 254–91.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* Also Br. Lib. Add. 17141 and 17190, noted by S. Brock, "The Dispute Poem: From Sumer to Syriac," *Bayn al-Nahrayn* (Mosul), 7(28) (1979), 417–26, esp. 421; and Albert, *op. cit.*, PO, 38 (1976), 160–81, but one MS identifies this as a *mêmra* rather than a *sôgîthâ*.

<sup>223</sup> Feldmann, *op. cit.*

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> For example, Christ and the Pharisee, Christ and John the Baptist, John and Herod, cf. *ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> Wellesz, *op. cit.*, 9; Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 40.

<sup>227</sup> R. Murray in *Annual of the Leeds University Oriental Society* (1980), cited by Brock, "Dispute Poem," 421.

<sup>228</sup> Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 40.

<sup>229</sup> Kirschner, *op. cit.*, classified the six *sôgyâthâ* he studied as either elegies or tensons, depending on their content. Another *sôgîthâ* is "On impiety," also in Kirschner, *op. cit.* Neither Baumstark nor Jeannin includes the acrostic type unless it is also a dialogue, cf. J. Jeannin, *Mélodies liturgiques syriennes et chaldéennes* (Paris, 1928), 2, 17.

<sup>230</sup> For references, cf. note 140 *supra*. Earlier studies of the Edessa Hymn have not commented on its literary structure, nor has it been noted previously that the hymn is an acrostic.

script traditions to such well-known Syriac authors as Ephrem, Narsai, and Jacob of Sarug, some of these attributions are uncertain or erroneous; others are without attribution; still other extant examples remain unpublished. As a result, the history of the development of the *sôgîthâ* and especially the interrelationship of the four types has not been delineated. It is unclear, therefore, how the Maronite type of *sôgîthâ* is related to the dialogical types, if it is related at all.<sup>231</sup>

### Appendix 3. Balai's *madrâšâ* on the dedication of the church at Qennešrîn

A *madrâšâ* on the rededication of the church at Qennešrîn (Beroea) composed by Balai in the early fifth century, A.D., is extant and provides certain parallels to the Edessa Hymn.<sup>232</sup> There are formal similarities between the two pieces, although the manuscripts entitle them differently, i.e., the one as a *sôgîthâ*, the other as a *madrâšâ*. Both have strophes consisting of four octosyllabic hemistichs; but in contrast to the Edessa Hymn, Balai's composition has sixty-eight strophes and is not an alphabetical acrostic.

There are also some thematic parallels. The anagogical tendency is present in Balai's poem: The church is called the dwelling place of God and "heaven on earth," while the service of the priests is compared with the ministry of the angels (strs. 1–7). The theme of the *κόσμος-οἶκος* is also represented, though only implicitly, in the statement, "[God] built us the world, and we [have built Him] a house" (strs. 31–32). Yet a greater emphasis is on the congregation or on the heart or mind (*lebbâ*) of the Christian, especially of the priest or bishop, as the Temple, the dwelling place of God (strs. 23–26).<sup>233</sup> Further, it is Solomon's Temple rather than the Mosaic Tabernacle that is invoked as the model of the church (strs. 27–30).

Some architectural features (the foundations, doors,

<sup>231</sup> In addition to the works of Duval, Jeannin, Baumstark, Wellesz, Brock, and Khouri-Sarkis cited in notes 140, 170, 219, and 222, cf. I. H. Dalmais, "L'apport des Églises syriennes à l'hymnographie chrétienne," *OrSyr*, 2 (1957), 243–61. For general bibliography on Syriac liturgical music, cf. H. Husmann, *Die Melodien des Wochenbreviers* (Shimta), Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 6.9; *Sitzungsberichte*, Phil.-His. Kl. (Vienna, 1969), I, 213–16. For discussion of the internal structure of this type of verse, cf. G. Hölscher, *Syrische Verskunst*, Leipzig Semitische Studien, 5, n.f. (Leipzig, 1932), 54–73, 128 ff.

<sup>232</sup> For the Syriac text, cf. J. J. Overbeck, *S. Ephraemi Syri, Rabulae Episcopae Edesseni, Balaei Aliorumque Opera Selecta* (Oxford, 1865), 251–58; German trans. G. Bickell, *Ausgewählte Gedichte der syrischen Kirchenväter: Cyrillonas, Baläus, Isaak von Antiochien und Jakob von Sarug*, BKV (Kempten, 1872), 74–82, and Landersdorfer in BKV, 6 (Kempten, 1912), 63–70. Strophe numbers here refer to Overbeck's Syriac text.

<sup>233</sup> This is the only context in which Balai uses *hayklâ*, temple, though Bickell and Landersdorfer translate both *hayklâ* and *bêth qûdšâ* as "Temple." *Bêth qûdšâ*, in str. 6–10, would be better translated as "sanctuary." The German translations obscure a distinction which is clearly present in the Syriac text.

courts, sanctuary [? *'athrâ*], and altar), are enumerated and interpreted, but not in cosmological terms. Here, apart from a general reliance on biblical imagery, the only similarity to the Edessa Hymn is in the use of nuptial imagery: “The [holy] place (*'athrâ*) is adorned, crowned with glory, since it is the day of the festival and the wedding feast, the new bridal couch [for ?] Christ the Bridegroom.” (str. 14). In this section we can see the difference between Balai’s emphasis and the Edessa Hymn. The culmination of Balai’s enumeration of architectural features of the church at Qennešrîn is the altar, this because it is the place where the eucharistic elements are consecrated. The notion of the Divine presence in the building and the ascent to heaven which God’s descent has made possible is a central feature of Balai’s poem (strs. 30–34), but it is not contemplation of the building as microcosm which mediates this ascent. It is clearly the eucharistic meal (strs. 35–37); God’s presence is in the sanctuary (str. 41). The theological explanation that Balai offers is a kenotic Christology with emphasis on the Incarnation, especially on the Nativity and Epiphany (strs.

38–66), rather than on the Creation account of Genesis or the Mosaic Tabernacle.

In conclusion, it is clear that certain formal similarities exist between Balai’s composition on the church at Qennešrîn and our unknown author’s hymn on the church at Edessa. Further, there are thematic parallels in the notion of the *κόσμος-οίκος* and in the interpretation of the building in terms of Biblical materials. Yet the specific focus of the Edessa Hymn on Genesis 1 and on the Mosaic Tabernacle is almost entirely absent from Balai’s composition, which emphasizes instead the Incarnation and the eucharistic meal. Although some architectural features are mentioned by Balai, a dome is not among them; so the very features which make the Edessa Hymn significant for architectural iconology are absent from Balai’s poem on the church at Qennešrîn. Still his poem is an interesting representative of *θεωρία* in Syriac, but one which is closer in emphasis to the liturgical commentaries than to the Edessa Hymn.

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